

THE PLATONIC RENAISSANCE
IN ENGLAND

Ernst Cassirer

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Translated by
JAMES P. PETTEGROVE



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TRANSLATOR'S FOREWORD

THIS is a translation of *Die platonische Renaissance in England und die Schule von Cambridge*, which was originally published by B. G. Teubner in Leipzig and Berlin as a contribution to the 'Studies of the Warburg Library.'

The task of rendering the German work into English was begun nearly two decades ago in gratitude for the author's friendship and intellectual guidance during the year at Oxford University. In that year Professor Cassirer went into exile and commenced the Odyssey that ended only with his death. At Oxford with characteristic patience and cheerfulness he resumed, in an alien tongue, his interrupted studies. It was typical of the man that he chose as the subject of his first lecture at All Souls College the Greek origins of the idea of justice. Similarly, throughout the year, neither his personal remarks nor his lectures reflected in any way the threats and indignities that reached him daily from his homeland. On the contrary, his words and actions were full of that devotion to reasonableness and tolerance, to justice and truth, which is part of the precious heritage of the modern world from the English Platonists discussed in this book.

The beautiful harmonies of sound and rhythm which characterise in varying degrees all the writings of Professor Cassirer are of course untranslatable. Perhaps it can be said that the present work suffers less by translation than most of the author's writings owing to

its concentration of subject-matter. In one respect, however, the present volume undoubtedly surpasses the German edition : all English-language excerpts—and there are a goodly number of these—can now be given in the original. Even the less artistic writers like Cudworth and Henry More convey certain personal features in their antiquated styles ; in the case of such masters of English prose as Whichcote, John Smith and Shaftesbury, the loss by translation is inestimable.

This translation has benefited by the criticisms of several specialists who have been kind enough to read the manuscript. Above all, it was read and approved by the author, who graciously responded to all my queries regarding the meanings of words and passages and the sources of unannotated quotations. I owe a special debt of gratitude to Dr Walter H. Freeman for generous assistance in translating the Latin and Greek cited by the author.

Special thanks are due the librarians of Harvard and Columbia universities, of the New York Public Library and of the Union Theological Seminary, for the use of their original editions of the works of the Cambridge Platonists.

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INTRODUCTION

THE Cambridge School seems to play only a minor role in the history of modern philosophy. It seems to take no decisive part in any phase of the universal intellectual movement which begins with the Renaissance and gives rise in the course of its development to a new form of knowledge and a new outlook on life and on the world. One could discuss this movement in its origins, growth, main tendencies, and essential aims without giving a thought to the work of the Cambridge School. Neither in intellectual scope nor immediate influence is this work comparable to the great spiritual forces which formed the modern world picture. It not only falls behind these forces, but frequently opposes them outright in the attempt to thwart them. Without sympathy or deeper understanding the Cambridge School opposes modern science as founded by Galileo and Kepler, for it sees therein only the support and forerunner of that mechanistic view of nature which on ethical and religious grounds it passionately resists. Likewise the new trend which Descartes gave to philosophy remains on the whole foreign to the Cambridge School. To be sure, an outstanding representative of the school, Henry More, greeted Descartes' teachings with enthusiasm at their first appearance. But the very extravagance of More's praise of Descartes betrays the essential incompatibility of their philosophies. For Descartes is praised neither for his logic nor for his method, nor as the founder of a new doctrine of knowledge and certainty. What attracts More, and for a time, fascinates him in

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the new philosophy, is the hope of finding in Descartes' doctrine of the thinking substance an invulnerable foundation for that metaphysical spiritualism which More saw as his goal. In this province especially he greeted Descartes as an ally. He saw in him, as in Plato, a champion against all atheistic philosophy.¹ And corresponding to this limitation in the content of philosophy is the cramped intellectual and stylistic form in which it finds expression. The influence of the scholastic form of argumentation and demonstration is undeniable in the chief writings of the Cambridge men. They sacrificed at the outset the best part of their effectiveness by clinging to a style of thought and presentation which their own contemporaries rightly looked upon as archaic. In respect to form a decisive change takes place only in the last stage of the movement, for it is through Shaftesbury that it joins the main stream of modern European thought. The founders of the Cambridge School did not live to see this continuation of their work, and from their standpoint they could neither have foreseen nor have understood it. For they were not universal thinkers ; on the contrary, they remained within the sphere of a certain philological and theological learning. They never cared to

¹ Cp. especially Henry More's letter to Clerselier, 1655 : 'Certainly this Cartesian philosophy is not only pleasant reading, but above all useful to that highest end of all philosophy, namely, religion. . . . The reasoning as well as the method of demonstration both concerning what God is and what mortal human life can not be, is soundest if it is based on Cartesian principles. And these are the two solidest foundations and supports of all true religion. . . . In brief, I would say that no philosophy exists, unless perchance you would make an exception of the Platonic system, which so stoutly bars the approach of atheists to those perverse objections and subterfuges, whither they are wont to take refuge, as this Cartesian philosophy does, if thoroughly understood.' Tr. from the Latin text of *Œuvres de Descartes*, ed. Adam and Tannery, vol. v, pp. 245f.

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point out and pursue new avenues of thought, but looked upon themselves chiefly as the guardians of a religious and philosophical tradition which they attempted to trace to its sources, and to fortify and defend by a thorough acquaintance with, and a painstaking interpretation of these sources. Hence retrospect continually triumphs over a free outlook. Even new and original thoughts are no sooner conceived than they are distorted almost beyond recognition by compression into ancient forms.

We may therefore easily understand why the ordinary history of philosophy allows only a very limited space to the thinkers of the Cambridge School—or occasionally omits them altogether. Kuno Fischer entitled his account of English philosophy, *Francis Bacon and his School*, showing in the very form of the title that for him the history of English thought coincides with the history of English empiricism. Proceeding from this conception he could simply ignore the Platonists of the Cambridge circle. They fell completely out of the development, as he saw it; and notice of them would have served only to interrupt and confuse¹ the clear and simple progress of thought that he was endeavouring to sketch. This general view continued to prevail even at the time when scholars began again to apply themselves to the chief writings of the Cambridge men and to treat them in laborious special investigations. For even at this stage no intrinsic importance

¹ Windelband's first version of his *Geschichte der neueren Philosophie*, 1878, makes no more mention of the teachings of the Cambridge School than does Kuno Fischer. In his later combined edition of his *Geschichte der Philosophie* (see English translation by James H. Tufts, *A History of Philosophy*, London and New York, 1905), Windelband alludes occasionally to the Cambridge School, but nowhere does he give a systematic presentation and evaluation of its teachings.

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was attached to these writings. Inquiry was directed not so much towards their content as towards their influence, in a positive as in a negative way, on others. The empiricists still occupied the focus of attention ; and the Cambridge School was granted an historical significance only in so far as it had co-operated, as rival and adversary, in the formation of the empirical philosophy, and produced in it certain polemical reactions. It was especially the first book of Locke's *Essay concerning human Understanding* that scholars attempted to explain by this comparative method. The fundamental tendency of Locke's attack on 'innate principles' seemed quite clear only in relation to the doctrine of the *a priori*¹ developed in Cudworth's *Intellectual System*. Thus empiricism always appeared as the central planet of English thought, about which all the other schools of thought gravitate like mere satellites ; and the systematic as well as the historical appreciation of the basic teachings of the Cambridge School did not go beyond this indirect consideration. Tulloch in his learned and profound work on the Cambridge Platonists approaches the subject purely from the theological stand-point. For him this school of thought becomes the most important representative of 'rational theology', as it developed in seventeenth-century England.² Tulloch's theological orientation has been retained since his time, especially by English historians ; and consequently, not even the most recent English publica-

¹ Cp. especially Georg von Hertling, *John Locke und die Schule von Cambridge*, Freiburg im Breisgau, 1892. See also Robert Sommer, *Lockes Verhältnis zu Descartes*, Berlin, 1887, and Georg Geil, *Über die Abhängigkeit Lockes von Descartes*, Strasbourg, 1887.

² John Tulloch, *Rational Theology and Christian Philosophy in England in the Seventeenth Century*, in two volumes, Edinburgh and London, 1872 ; VOL. II is entitled 'The Cambridge Platonists.'

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tions have superseded Tulloch's results either in content or in principle.¹ The history of ethics has fallen in line with the history of theology in returning to the fundamental doctrines of Cambridge Platonism. Martineau, in his well-known work *Types of Ethical Theory*, made use of Cudworth's ethical theories to show the nature and quality of the purely dianoetic ethics.² In my history of the epistemological problem I have examined Cudworth's doctrine of knowledge and the significance of Henry More's spiritualistic doctrine of space for the development of the philosophy of nature of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.³ But only certain fragments have been retrieved. The work of the Cambridge School has indeed been illuminated from various sides, but the real intellectual principle that Cambridge Platonism stands for has not been grasped—and it is for the exposition and development of this principle alone that it deserves a place in the history of modern thought. The task of the following study, then, is to elucidate this principle, and in so doing, to clarify the central ideas underlying the philosophic achievement of the Cambridge School. One cannot accomplish this task simply by going the rounds of the teachings in question. One cannot treat their epistemology, their ethics and theology, their philosophy of religion and philosophy

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of nature, as so many separate fragments, and merely summarise their contents. The more detailed and precise such a summary, the greater is the danger that it will conceal the general principle; and so lose sight of the kernel of the teachings of Cambridge Platonism. Such a kernel, nevertheless, exists, however thick the enveloping shell, and however hard it is at times to crack this shell. Cambridge Platonism represents a coherent philosophical position, which is maintained throughout the whole extent of the most heterogeneous problems, and which, in spite of all differences of individual thinkers, continually recurs as the central theme. Thus the name 'Cambridge School' cannot, as has been the case with few exceptions in previous historical accounts, be taken merely as a collective term for a particular circle of thinkers or for a certain group of individual doctrines. It refers rather to a certain line of thought of independent force and significance, which is deliberately and violently opposed to the prevailing direction of English thought in the seventeenth century. Even when, historically speaking, this line of thought is repulsed and succumbs to the prevailing philosophy, it does not belie its systematic identity or yield up any of its essential worth. In fact, almost all of the philosophical issues dealt with by the Cambridge thinkers are now antiquated and forgotten, so much so that to revert to them again might seem to be the affair of an idle historical curiosity. But that which has retained its vitality and been a moving force throughout the intervening centuries, is the intellectual setting in which these problems originated. On considering this setting one is astonished to find that it by no means stands in isolation, and that it is not the work

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of a single philosophical sect, but that here, within a narrow circle of thinkers and in a remote section of the learned world, questions are being hammered out which are to affect the very conception and structure of the modern mind. The following considerations endeavour to show in what light the Cambridge School viewed these questions, under what presuppositions it formulated them, and by what means it tried to solve them. They endeavour to indicate the threads which bind Cambridge Platonism to the past in the whole philosophical movement of the Italian and the English Renaissance, and to the future in the general history of thought in the eighteenth century. It is only in such a context that this intellectual achievement with all the strangeness, indeed oddity, which it possesses for us today, does not appear as a mere literary curio, but as an integrating factor, an important and necessary stage in the growth of the modern mind.

CHAPTER ONE

THE PLATONIC ACADEMY IN FLORENCE : ITS INFLUENCE ON ENGLISH HUMANISM

IF one refers to the Cambridge thinkers according to the usual practice as the 'English Platonists', there is nothing objectively incorrect in this designation ; and yet, like most party and sect names in philosophy, it is no more than a conventional half-truth. For, however often these men appeal to Plato, and however much they venerate him as their patron saint in philosophy, yet their achievement is by no means the direct continuation or the mere revival of Platonic thought. Many essential phases of Platonism never enter into their purview ; while, on the other hand, certain features of the thought which they eagerly pursue are so greatly modified that their original is scarcely recognisable. In these writers the teachings of Plato always appear as it were transformed through a refracting medium. It is especially that picture of the Platonic philosophy drawn by Marsilio Ficino and the Florentine Academy that seemed authentic and exemplary to the thinkers of the Cambridge School. They added no essentially new feature to this picture ; nor did they have the courage and capacity for its historical criticism. Hence all stable historical demarcations vanish : the primary and the derived, the original and the traditional, are never differentiated. The seventeenth century was not ripe for such a distinction. It lacked both the systematic will and the

historical instrument. For Cudworth and More, as for Ficino and Pico della Mirandola, Plato formed but one link in that golden chain of divine revelation, which besides him includes Moses and Zoroaster, Socrates and Christ, Hermes Trismegistus and Plotinus. Plato is for them the living proof that the true Philosophy is never opposed to genuine Christianity. He is the ancestor and patron of that *pia philosophia*, which existed even before the Christian revelation, and which has proved its force and vitality throughout the centuries.¹

Though this fundamental conception of the Florentine School greatly influenced the Italian Renaissance, yet it found no lasting abode on Italian soil. The inner tension out of which there arose the intellectual and philosophical culture of the Renaissance was destined presently to force apart again the two opposite poles which come together in the Florentine Academy. The unity that Ficino and Pico believed they had firmly established faded at last into a mere dream-image. Indeed, during their own lifetime, they can scarcely preserve this unity ; the harmony they long for changes again and again into violent discord. They are unable to silence the opposition within themselves between faith and knowledge, but continue to experience it as a tragic dualism pervading all their lives and labours until they end in weary resignation. Even Pico finally has no more independent power to withstand Savonarola's impetuous solicitation ; he is ready to obey the latter's call and retire to the San Marco monastery. This antithesis becomes still more violent and un-

relenting in the future course of Italian thought. One now sees with increasing clarity that within the Florentine Academy it had been not so much reconciled as disguised. The Christian and heathen elements, which Ficino's *Theologia Platonica* had tried to compress into one whole, disintegrate like oil and water. The secularisation and paganisation of thought are not to be halted; they advance and break through all the artificial obstacles laboriously erected by the Florentine School. Even the fundamental problems, the points of support and departure, of the Florentine philosophy are drawn into this movement and swept along with it. On the doctrine of the immortality of the soul Pomponazzi constructs his thesis of a twofold truth, by which he proves that in questions of metaphysics reason and faith are essentially contradictory, and can never arrive at the same results.¹ And the thesis of the Florentine School is no less sharply confronted by its antithesis when one turns to the doctrine of Eros, the central teaching of this school. The Platonic doctrine of love, which Ficino had fused with Christian teachings, and which he had tried to elevate to the height and consecration of this religion, is the very doctrine which his successors presently invoked against Christianity. If the Florentine thinkers had joined Eros and Agape, Giordano Bruno so far alters the conception of Eros that it becomes the strongest evidence of the Titanic power of man. Eros lends to man the heroic passion which breaks all the bounds of finitude and reveals to him the infinite universe. Thus again the bond loosens which Ficino and Pico had tried to secure. Owing to the intellectual and political situation in Italy, Renais-

¹ For fuller treatment see *Individuum und Kosmos*, pp. 143ff.

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sance culture was faced with an inescapable crisis in its destiny ; it had to decide whether to go back to Savonarola or forward to Macchiavelli, to Cesare Borgia, to Giordano Bruno.

The intellectual situation is different, however, as soon as we step on English soil. Ficino's doctrine could not of course possess here the illustrious prestige that it had enjoyed at the Florentine court of the Medici. But its influence, although at first confined within a narrow circle, was for this very reason all the more profound and insistent. For in the intellectual life of England the fundamental philosophical tendency of the Florentine Academy hit upon a kindred atmosphere and kindred religious forces. Since the eighties of the fifteenth century, England had participated in the humanist movement through Grocyn and Linacre¹ ; but English humanism exhibits important differences from the Continental, and especially from the Italian model. Italian humanism from an early period sought to make its peace with religion ; but this peace was limited in the main to entering into a tolerable relationship with the church and gaining an ever-increasing influence there. This influence is achieved by persevering toil. To an increasing degree humanism wins over the papal court ; and when Lnea Silvio Piccolomini as Pius II ascends the papal throne, the alliance between humanism and the church seems to receive its final endorsement. But this external union cannot disguise the fact that in the meantime a growing estrangement had set in between the intellectual

interests of humanism and those of religion. The great Italian humanists looked upon the traditional objects of religious faith with a cool and deliberate scepticism. They had not only freed themselves from the bondage of dogma; but, like Lorenzo Valla in his writings *De Voluptate* and *De Professione Religiosorum*, they were pushing on to the struggle against Christian ethics and the Christian way of life.¹ But in England humanism takes the opposite course from the first. Its criticism is directed against scholastic systems and against antiquated and 'barbaric' forms of theological learning, but never against religion. On the contrary, the forces of humanism work for the sake of religion. The humanist watchword *ad fontes* is applied primarily to further the discovery and interpretation of the sources of Christianity. It is characteristic that John Colet on his return from Italy in the year 1496 begins his teaching career in Oxford, which is to draw a steadily increasing audience, with a lecture on the Pauline Epistles. This lecture, even in its external form, departs from the exacting rules of scholastic teaching. It was an unusual undertaking for a young teacher, scarcely thirty years old and holding as yet no theological degree, to venture upon a Biblical theme. In a letter to Colet, Erasmus cites especially the circumstance that Colet was given a free hand in this his first public appearance as a proof of the liberal spirit of Oxford University.² Open hostility to the medieval form of scriptural

¹ For fuller treatment see *Individuum und Kosmos*, pp. 82ff.

² Erasmus to Colet, October 1499 (*Epistles of Erasmus: From his Earliest Letters to his Fifty-first Year*, tr. Francis Morgan Nichols, New York, 1901, p. 221): 'Among the divines themselves there are not a few who are willing and able to help your noble endeavours. Every one indeed will give you his hand, since there are not any of the doctors in this famous School, who have not listened attentively to the lectures on the

exegesis was here declared, perhaps for the first time in the history of the University. Against the traditional division of the scriptural sense into a literal, a figurative, an allegorical, and an anagogical meaning, is urged the working-out of one strictly unified sense. Thus the Pauline Epistles are consistently treated by Colet as a finished whole not to be broken up into separate dogmas, but to be understood and interpreted as the expression of a single fundamental religious attitude.¹ This is the only possible way, as he believes, to make the Bible what in essence and true intent it really is : a book not meant to communicate theoretical and dogmatical knowledge about things of the next world, but designed rather to effect a reformation and revival of life. The restitution of this simple practical meaning and basis of Christianity forms the real aim and essence of Colet's reform. From the standpoint of the general history of thought, we have here the tie which connects this reform with the Florentine Academy and, beyond that, with Nicolas of Cusa. From a basic text of medieval theology, the pseudo-Dionysian writing *Περὶ θείων ὀνομάτων*, Cusa drew an inference diametrically opposed to scholastic thinking and to the general scholastic position.² He develops from this

Pauline Epistles which you have delivered during these last three years. And in this I do not know which most deserves praise, the modesty of those who, being themselves authorised teachers, do not shrink from appearing as hearers of one much their junior and not furnished with any doctor's degree, or the singular erudition, eloquence and integrity of the man they have thought worthy of this honour.' For the original Latin text, see *Works of Erasmus*, ed. P. S. Allen, Oxford, 1906, vol. 1, pp. 247f.

¹ Concerning Colet's method of interpreting Scripture see especially Frederic Seebohm, *The Oxford Reformers : John Colet, Erasmus and Thomas More*, London, 1869, pp. 29ff.

² In regard to the following passage, see especially *Individuum und Kosmos*, pp. 8ff. ; 30ff., 74ff., and *passim*.

inference a form of scepticism, a conception of '*ignorantia*', which in its consequences nullifies the form of the great medieval systems. But this very nullification carries with it the germ and the requirement of a new positive basis of faith. The view that all finite thought and understanding are by nature symbolical, that they move in the circle of mere names and signs, and that no name can comprehend divine essence, constitutes a new point of departure in religion. It opens the way for that conception of faith which receives its finest and most universal expression in Cusa's work *De Pace Fidei*. Cusa does not infer the sheer impotence of the symbol and symbolic knowledge from the fact that everything transitory is but a symbol. On the contrary, he endows the symbol with new content and value. The symbol cannot be adequate for knowledge, for dogmatic 'precision'; it is confined within the limits of 'otherness' and 'conjecture'. But, in so far as absolute being and absolute unity are knowable at all, it is in just this way that they can be truly known: '*cognoscitur inattingibilis veritatis unitas in alteritate conjecturali*' (the unattainable unity of truth is known in conjectural otherness). Since no name can apprehend the divine, or exhaust its meaning, it can therefore be conceded, on the other hand, that all names, in so far as they proceed from a genuine religious conviction and are conscious of their limited and mediate capacity, may be assured of a certain relationship to the divine. Thus apparent scepticism first opens the way to variety, freedom and scope in moral and religious ways of life, and transfers the centre of religious 'truth' from dogma to the ways of life themselves. Henceforth, neither variety nor contradiction in religion need give offence. The

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danger of heterodoxy is not overcome by the establishment of one valid system of thought and doctrine binding for all, but by a fundamental insight into the limits of *δόξα* (opinion) as such, into its necessary incommensurability with absolute being. Ficino's *De Christiana Religione* had gone farther in the direction marked out by Cusa in his *De Pace Fidei*. Ficino's work too bears the impress of the axiom: '*una est religio in ritum varietate*' (religion is one amid a variety of ceremonies).

It is perhaps the very diversity in the manner of worship, as decreed by God, which radiates a marvellous charm throughout His universe. For the ruler of Heaven it is more important to be actually worshipped than to be worshipped by this or that gesture. . . . He would rather be worshipped in any manner, be it ever so absurd, so long as it is human, than not to be worshipped at all on account of pride.¹

It was this religious temper of the Florentine Circle with which Colet was inspired during his stay in Italy, and which thereafter determined the direction and goal of his humanism.² Even in the lectures on the Pauline Epistles, which for the most part—contrary to the prevailing method of university teaching—are extremely sparing in appeals to outside authority, Colet expressly mentions and copiously cites Ficino's *Theologia Platonica*.³

¹ Ficino, *De Christiana Religione*, ch. iv; cp. *Individuum und Kosmos*, p. 76.

² Whether or not Colet on his Italian journey visited Florence, and whether he met members of the Florentine Circle, cannot be decided with full certainty on the basis of biographical data. But the problem of intellectual relationship with which we are here concerned is not affected by this circumstance. For the biographical material, see Seebohm, *The Oxford Reformers*, pp. 21 ff.

³ Cp. Seebohm, *op. cit.*, p. 39. Colet also cites Pico della Mirandola.

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More important, however, than this external evidence is the content of the doctrine here proclaimed. Colet interprets the Pauline doctrine of justification as the reciprocal love between God and man. Justification consists in this alone, that God turns to man in love and by so doing enkindles in man the love of God as the source of all being and of all goodness. According to Colet the mission of Christ has no other significance or aim.¹ In this fundamental conception, Colet's humanism is in complete agreement with that form of piety which had its origin at Deventer among the Brothers of Common Life and was brought to Italy by Cusa. Thus, in the form it had received meanwhile at Florence, this new religious spirit is brought back again from Italy and reinstated in the North—another illustration of that lively oscillation of ideas so characteristic of the intellectual and cultural history of the Renaissance.² The temper of this 'Christian humanism can perhaps be most aptly paraphrased in these lines from Goethe :

If you day and night bestow
Much to hear and much to know,
Listen at another door
Truth more deeply to explore.
If a sense of right you seek,
Turn to God in spirit meek :
He who burns with honest love
Is not unknown to God above.³

¹ See the selections from Colet's lectures in Seebohm, *op. cit.*, pp. 37f. (footnote). ² Cp. *Individuum und Kosmos*, pp. 34ff.

³ [Goethe, *West-östlicher Divan*, 'Buch der Betrachtungen' :

Bist du Tag und Nacht beflissen,
Viel zu hören, viel zu wissen ;
Horch an einer andern Türe,
Wie zu wissen sich gebühre.

For this was the motto according to which Colet shaped all his lectures at Oxford. Knowledge of God is not possible for man here below and cannot, therefore, be expected of him ; what can, however, be expected of man is that he should love God. Colet objects to the scholastic systems of theology that they had failed to recognise this plain truth, and that with a false intellectual pride they had polluted and buried the fountains of genuine devotion. When Erasmus in a talk with Colet praises Thomas Aquinas because, besides being versed in Scripture, he was abundantly acquainted with the literature of antiquity as well, Colet replies that Aquinas, through his passion for defining everything, exposed himself to all the arrogance of knowledge and falsified the central teachings of Christianity through the admixture of his profane philosophy. The kernel of the reform for which Colet strives lies in the principle that the true student of divinity should hold strictly to the Gospel and to the Apostles' Creed, and leave all dogmatic questions to the fruitless strife of theologians.¹

This fundamental maxim of Colet's permanently influenced Erasmus. At Deventer among the Brothers of Common Life, where Erasmus passed his youth and apprenticeship, he was imbued with the spirit of a new piety, with the ideal of '*devotio moderna*'.² But his central conception of religion reaches full maturity only when he sets foot on English soil. He always

Soll das Rechte zu dir ein,
Fühl' in Gott was rechts zu sein :
Wer von reiner Lieb entbrannt
•Wird vom Lieben Gott erkannt.

The version given in the text is mine.—Tr.]

¹ Fuller treatment in Seebohm, *op. cit.*, pp. 105ff.

² See Paul Mestwerdt, *Die Anfänge des Erasmus. Humanismus und 'devotio moderna'*, Leipzig, 1917.

thought of England as his second intellectual home. In his life of wandering the years spent there were among the happiest and most fruitful. In constant interchange of ideas with Colet and Thomas More, those works matured and were written which spread the new humanistic religion throughout Europe. When in the year 1510 Colet founds St Paul's School as an embodiment of his ideas on the reform of religious and learned instruction, it is Erasmus whom he calls to his aid¹; and it was at the house of More that Erasmus wrote one of his most famous and influential works, the *Encomium Moriae*. In this work, as in the *Enchiridion Militis Christiani*, the main ideas of religious humanism acquired new scope and substance along with a new literary form. They are not merely abstractly developed; they do not remain confined to the scholar's study, but venture to encroach upon the immediate problems of life and the important problems of the time. With this courageous spirit for the criticism and renewal of life, humanism became for the first time a truly intellectual and reforming force. In Italy it had never attained such force and depth. When Erasmus opposes and criticises the scholastic form of knowledge, his starting-point is the same as Lorenzo Valla's. He too points out that content presented in such form, in the fetters of "barbaric" monks' Latin, cannot, because

¹ Cp. Erasmus to Botzheim, 1523: 'A poem embracing the fundamental Christian concepts has been published. It is written in the simplest style. For thus John Colet directed; Colet, who at great expense had set up a new school of letters in which he wanted youth to be grounded and trained not less in Christian devotion than in learning. For he was a man endowed with remarkable farsightedness, who, seeing his own age in a most deplorable state, chose those of tender years that he might place the new wine of Christ in new skins.'—[Tr. from *Works of Erasmus*, ed. P. S. Allen, vol. 1, p. 6.]

of the barbarity of the language, achieve real elevation and purity.¹ But the criticism of style and form is not the sole or the predominant exception that Erasmus takes to Scholasticism. The grounds of true divinity, the *ratio verae theologiae*, which he seeks, are of another and deeper stratum. True divinity must be based on Scripture ; it must go back to the original and philologically purified Scriptural text. But the sense and the real substance of Scripture cannot be discovered by the simple method of the comparison of texts, or by the allegorical interpretation of the Biblical word. This sense can be understood and assimilated only from the central point of the moral and personal life. Religious experience forms the centre and source, a purified philology forms the medium and intellectual instrument, for the comprehension of Scripture. Thus the new form of philology which Erasmus introduces depends upon a truly universal conception of the Logos itself, which is now opposed to the blind and inflexible belief in the letter of Scripture. In this consists the distinction

¹ Cp. Erasmus to Colet, 1499 : 'and this new brand of divines, who grow old in mere subtleties and sophistical carping, you say they don't please you. Verily, my Colet, you feel exactly as I do. Not that I condemn the studies of these men, I who do not applaud no study at all ; but since these studies are not grounded in ancient and elegant letters, it seems to me that they are capable only of producing a captious and argumentative man. Whether they can produce a wise man, let others see. For these men exhaust their intellects in barren and, as it were, harsh subtlety ; and they are nourished by no vitality and animated by no spirit. And, what is most important of all, by their stutterings and by the defects of their most filthy speech, they divest of her charm Theology herself, that Queen of all mental disciplines, so well endowed and adorned by the eloquence of the ancients. . . . And so you may see how that, which once was most dignified and full of majesty, is now almost mute, destitute, and in tatters.' [For the original Latin, see Allen, *op. cit.*, VOL. I, pp. 246ff.] Regarding the relationship to Italian humanism, and, in particular, to Lorenzo Vaila, see *Individuum und Kosmos*, pp. 169f.

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which Erasmus draws between his philosophical and theological position and that of Valla which he considers as possessing a predominantly rhetorical tendency.

The connection between the new ideal of knowledge and life is most clearly revealed in Erasmus's aversion to those who saw the religious authority of the Bible imperilled by philological and literary criticism, and the grounds of religious faith subverted.¹ He shows the same broad-mindedness in his attitude towards the religious ways of life of the Middle Ages. He rejected unreservedly that ascetic ideal of the monastic orders which again and again had attained a disproportionate ascendancy among the members of the Florentine Circle, and to which even a mind like Pico's nearly succumbed in his last days. To this ideal Erasmus opposes a freer form of Christianity, not bound by monastic robe and rule.² And this religious ideal does not stop at the frontiers of Christianity. The "communion of the saints" is expressly extended to the

¹ See especially Erasmus's letter to Martin Dorpius, 1515, in Allen, *op. cit.*, VOL. II, pp. 90-114. Concerning Valla, see VOL. II, p. 112: 'Indeed I think that Valla deserves the greatest praise, Valla, a rhetorician rather than a theologian, a person who has shown such diligence in the study of sacred letters that he has even collated Greek and Latin texts. And yet in several places I disagree with this man, especially in those which pertain to theological matters.'

² Cp. Erasmus's letter to Servatius Rogerus, 1524: 'But you perhaps think it a good part of happiness to die among your associates. But this idea deceives and deludes not only you, but almost everyone. We associate Christ and devotion with certain places, with forms of worship, with a mode of living and with certain ceremonies. We think he is lost who has changed a white robe for a black one, or who has changed his cowl for a cap, and then changes his place. I would venture to say that great harm to Christian devotion has come from those orders which are called religions, although they were perhaps at first founded in pious zeal. Then little by little they grew and broke up into thousands of divisions. . . . How much more is it in accordance with the teaching of Christ to regard the whole Christian world as one house and, so to speak, as one monastery; and to consider all men as fellow-canonists and fellow-ermites.' (Quoted from Allen, *op. cit.*, VOL. I, pp. 567f.)

great spirits of antiquity ; there are more saints than one can find in our church calendars. Here again emerges Ficino's conception of one original revelation, which is equally evident in Scripture and in the writings of the ancient philosophers. This "evangelical philosophy" was universal before the universe split up into many philosophical and religious sects ; and it is not to be confined to dogmas, or limited to fixed rites. In his *Encomium Moriae* Erasmus introduced the literary form which was to combat dogmatic and literal religious faith most successfully. With all the weapons of satire and of deliberate irony, Erasmus here portrays that type of scholar who has a ready explanation and reason for everything, as if he had been initiated into the mysteries of creation and taken into secret council by God Himself. The doctrine which in this work Erasmus propounds in the abstract he upheld as well in practice whenever a decision was desired of him on particular points of dogma or divinity. When John Slechta in the year 1519 asked his opinion regarding the religious disputes in Bohemia, Erasmus's reply follows the same lines as those just described.

In my opinion [he writes], many could be reconciled with the Roman Church if, instead of wishing to fix and define every little detail, we were to let that suffice which is clearly commanded in Scripture and is indispensable to salvation. But these things are few in number. Nowadays, however, we make out of one article six hundred—and some of these are such as could be readily passed over or doubted without any loss of piety. If anyone wants to find fault with the divine nature, the hypostasis of Christ, or any abstruse matters concerning the sacraments, let him do so ; only let him not try to force his opinions upon others. For the

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more we pile up definitions, the more we lay the foundations of controversy, because the nature of mortals is such that when a thing has been once established they cling to it stubbornly. By these and innumerable other fine-spun arguments, of which some are proud, the minds of men are called away from those things which alone are at issue.¹

The conviction voiced here by Erasmus is the same as that which inspires the political, social and religious reforms of his friend More. Thomas More stands among the finest and most fertile minds of his epoch, and this intellectual fertility is not free of inner contradictions. All the ideals and all the higher aspirations of the time meet in him. He is a humanist and a practical lawyer, a political mind and a religious thinker, a realistic statesman and a Utopian reformer, all in one. This diversity of powers did not always find complete equilibrium in his personal life. His activities, therefore, compared to those of Colet and Erasmus, present many more problems and inner tensions. He strove constantly for a way of life suited to his powers, and he wavered between the contemplative quiet of the scholar and a stirring and busy existence, between retirement to a monastery and active participation in English politics. Owing to this variety of interests, More's thought does not present an unbroken line of development. Much that he emphatically maintains in theory, he had to belie as an English political leader. He was himself aware of this inconsistency, as he himself has shown clearly enough in his *Utopia*. In this work More distinguishes between a purely abstract philosophy and that *philosophia civilior*

¹ See Erasmus's letter to Johannis Slechta, 1 Nov. 1519, in Allen, *op. cit.*, VOL. IV, pp. 113-19.

which knows its scene of action and how to adapt itself to it, and how to play its role as is becoming and proper in the drama that is momentarily being enacted.¹ But it is, after all, less the unity of a theoretical doctrine consistently maintained than the unity and steady assurance of his character which raises More above this apparent discrepancy. In this respect he is the most magnificent and sublime figure of the whole epoch. In him one sees for the first time how a genuinely religious nature—a nature which does not blench even before the demands of religious martyrdom—maintains and promulgates, nevertheless, a “religion within the bounds of reason”. For a universal theism, grounded in pure reason, forms the core of that Utopian religion depicted by More. The supreme legislator of the Utopian state was not so presumptuous as to want to make any stipulation concerning religion, because he was not sure whether God Himself does not intend manifold and diverse forms of worship, and hence give to some this and to others that form of religious inspiration.² Thus we find again—agreeing to the letter—the same religious ideal as that depicted by Cusa in his *De Pace Fidei* and by Ficino in his *De Christiana Religione*. The external evidence also confirms this connection: for More never ceased being a passionate admirer of Pico della Mirandola. He not only translated the *Life of Pico* into English, but he acknowledged as the ideal pattern for the conduct of his own life that famous letter which Pico had addressed to his nephew. This hero-worship of Pico is based on the fact that More

¹ Thomas More, *Utopia*, BOOK I, in *Utopia with the Dialogue of Comfort*, tr. Raphe Robynson, Everyman Library, London, 1910, pp. 41f.

² Id., BOOK II, in op. cit., pp. 102ff.

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finds articulate in him in all its purity that new type of religious spirit for which he is striving.¹ Precisely this was the chief service of the Platonism of the Florentine Academy to English thought at the time of the Renaissance. Florentine Platonism freed English thought of the narrowness and fetters of ecclesiastical tradition by confronting it with the question of the universal grounds, of the *a priori* of religion. And this is the point at which the Cambridge School comes on the scene. The Platonic concept of apriority becomes the instrument with which the Cambridge thinkers attack the whole intellectual world, and by means of which they seek to undermine on the one hand the central position of English empiricism and on the other the views of the orthodox church system and of the several religious sects.

¹ Concerning Thomas More's relationship to Pico della Mirandola, see, for instance, Seebohm, *The Oxford Reformers*, pp. 151ff.

CHAPTER TWO

THE IDEA OF RELIGION IN THE CAMBRIDGE SCHOOL¹

ON looking into the writings of the Cambridge Platonists and considering not only their principal philosophical works, but the theological treatises and the sermons as well, one is at first astonished at the manner in which they interweave quite heterogeneous notions. The Dialogues of Plato and the Enneads of Plotinus have gained an almost canonical validity; they are placed on a par with the books of the Bible and treated with an equal veneration as sources of religious knowledge. Appeals to the Holy Scriptures and to Plato's doctrine of knowledge and to Neoplatonic metaphysics stand indiscriminately side by side. It is no wonder, then, that the theological opponents of the Cambridge School were seriously offended at this intermingling of the holy and the profane, of the Christian and the heathen. It is on this

¹ In contrast to all former works on the subject, the following investigation approaches the Cambridge School from the viewpoint of its relationship to philosophic systems and the history of ideas. This study rejects all biographical detail and lengthy treatment of individual doctrines, in order to trace in simple outline the general underlying ideas, and to throw light on their systematic inter-relations as well as their derivation from a single principle. The reader is referred to Tulloch's still unsurpassed work and to Powicke (above, p. 5, n 1) for the historical development of the Cambridge School and for all biographical and bibliographical detail. Besides the chief works of Ralph Cudworth (1617-85) and Henry More (1614-87), the following study is based on the sermons and writings of Benjamin Whichcote (1609-83) and John Smith (1616-52). Nathaniel Culverwell (1618-51), who is only loosely connected with the Cambridge School, receives only occasional mention.

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point that the controversy breaks out which theological orthodoxy from the first carries on against the Cambridge School. When Benjamin Whichcote, the real founder of this school, enters upon his career as preacher and tutor in Cambridge, it is this feature of his activity which very soon excites violent opposition. His own former teacher, Anthony Tuckney, under whose guidance he had pursued his first theological studies, addresses a letter to him in which he urgently warns him to turn back from the false way upon which he has embarked. He reproaches Whichcote with the fact that for some time he has abandoned all other studies in order to devote himself completely to philosophy and metaphysics. Tuckney endeavours to show his former pupil that by glorifying the "natural light" he has moved into the dangerous neighbourhood of the Arminians and Socinians and exposed himself to all heretical errors. Nothing is more questionable than to attribute true blessedness to the ancient philosophers and "other heathens", and to defend and recommend a morality which preserves but a thin colouring of Christianity.¹ In these typical sentences and in Whichcote's reply to them the central theme is given about which henceforth the whole philosophical development of the Cambridge School moves. If the reconciliation of Platonic and Christian doctrines, and the defence of "natural" reason and natural religion by the Cambridge thinkers, is to mean anything more than a superficial syncretism, then that underlying thought must be made explicit from which this unifica-

¹ See 'Eight Letters of Dr Anthony Tuckney and Dr Benjamin Whichcote,' included in *Moral and Religious Aphorisms*, ed. Samuel Salter, London, 1753; also Tulloch, op. cit., vol. II, pp. 52ff.

tion is derived and from which it follows as a necessary consequence.

In order to elucidate the central motif we must go back to Plotinus's doctrine of the soul. The position of the soul in the cosmos is for Plotinus determined by the fact that it has no fixed and strictly defined place within the world. The Aristotelian conception of the soul as not so much a particular thing as rather, in a sense, the All of things (ἡ ψυχὴ τὰ ὄντα πῶς ἔστιν), is taken by Plotinus to mean that the soul's being depends upon its attitude, upon its actual behaviour. It does not have a given specific nature imprinted upon it from the first, but becomes identified with the end of its own determination. Its constitution, that is, its metaphysical and ethical quality, depends upon the direction it takes, upon its turning towards the higher or the lower, towards the world of *nous* (spirit) or that of corporeal nature.¹ Knowledge of the divine and of the intelligible world is possible only for that soul which has achieved within itself the decisive turning towards and away from the sensible to the intelligible. The soul contemplates the divine, not by virtue of a revelation which comes to it from without, but by creating the divine within itself and thereby making itself like the divine :

Withdraw within yourself, and examine yourself. If you do not yet therein discover beauty, do as the artist, who cuts off, polishes, purifies until he has adorned his statue with all the marks of beauty. Remove from your soul, therefore, all that is superfluous, straighten out all that is crooked,

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purify and illuminate what is obscure, and do not cease perfecting your statue until the divine resplendence of virtue shines forth upon your sight. . . . But if you try to fix on it an eye soiled by vice, an eye that is impure, or weak, so as not to be able to support the splendour of so brilliant an object, that eye will see nothing, not even if it were shown a sight easy to grasp. The organ of vision will first have to be rendered analogous and similar to the object it is to contemplate. Never would the eye have seen the sun unless first it had assumed its form ; likewise, the soul could never see beauty, unless she herself first became beautiful.¹

This basic thought of Plotinus's theology, which had already decisively influenced Cusa and Ficino, becomes henceforth the core of English Neoplatonism. It occupies the central position in Henry More's *Enchiridion ethicum*, the principal ethical work of the Cambridge School.

To estimate the fruit of virtue by that imaginary knowledge of it which is acquired by mere definition, is very much the same as if one were to estimate the nature of fire from a fire painted on the wall. . . . Every vital good is perceived and judged by life and sense. . . . If you have ever *been* this, you have *seen* this.²

That this thought is felt by all the Cambridge men as the crucial principle of their doctrine, is especially evident in that they themselves allude to it as a methodo-

¹ Plotinus, 'Of Beauty,' *Ennead I*, BOOK VI, chs. 8-9 ; cp. *Plotinus' Complete Works*, tr. Kenneth Sylvan Guthrie, four volumes, London, Geo. Bell, 1918, VOL. I, pp. 52ff. For the original Greek, see *Les Oeuvres de Plotin*, ed. Brehier, VOL. I, pp. 104ff.

² Henry More, *Enchiridion ethicum*, BOOK I, ch. ii, p. 9.

logical axiom before all important passages in which they attempt the determination and more exact formulation of their philosophy of religion. John Smith begins his discourse *Of the true Way or Method of attaining to Divine Knowledge* with the remark that every doctrine and science rests upon certain principles, certain *προλήψεις*, upon which the whole structure of this science is dependent. Hence, prior to any determination of the nature of the Deity, one must assure oneself of the "True Method of Knowing". The peculiar feature of this knowledge, however, is that it consists not so much in words as in things, not in abstractions but in realities.

They are not alwaies the best skill'd in Divinity, that are the most studied in those *Pandects* which it is sometimes digested into, or that have erected the greatest Monopolies of Art and Science. He that is most Practical in Divine things, hath the purest and sincerest Knowledge of them, and not he that is most Dogmatical . . . the knowledge of Divinity that appears in *Systems* and *Models* is but a poor wan light, but the powerful energy of Divine knowledge displaies it self in purified Souls : here we shall finde the true *πεδίον ἀληθείας*, as the antient Philosophy speaks, *the land of Truth*. To seek our Divinity merely in Books and Writings, is *to seek the living among the dead* : . . . he [God] is best discern'd *νοεῖν ἐπαφῇ*, as Plotinus phraseth it, by *an Intellectual touch* of him . . . as in the natural Body it is the Heart that sends up good Blood and warm Spirits into the Head, whereby it is best enabled to its several Functions ; so that which enables us to know and understand aright in the things of God, must be a living principle of Holiness within us. When *the Tree of Knowledge* is not planted by *the Tree of Life*, and sucks not up sap from thence, it may be

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as well fruitful with *evil* as with *good*, and bring forth *bitter* fruit as well as *sweet*.^f

We have here a clear statement of the form of "divine knowledge" which the Cambridge School takes as a foundation upon which to base its historical position and achievement. To consider the religious philosophy of the Cambridge men as belonging to the type of theological rationalism, is not an exact and adequate expression of this achievement. At most the '*genus proximum*' may be determined in this way, but not the '*differentia specifica*'. Such a classification offers only a vague idea ; it provides no concrete historical insight into the nature and formative forces of the Cambridge School. The Cambridge thinkers are very far from that kind of rationalism which becomes prevalent in the eighteenth century in the systems of English deism and in the French and German philosophy of the Enlightenment.

For the Cambridge conception of religious reason cannot be derived from the power of thinking alone. The presupposition shared by all these men is that the real instrument of religion is not to be looked for in thought and discursive inference. They combat logical as well as theological dogmatics, and dogmatics of the understanding as well as those of faith. For in both they see an obstacle to that pristine grasp of the divine which can spring only from the fundamental disposition of the will. These 'rationalists' could also have assented to Pascal's famous definition of faith : '*voilà ce que c'est que la foi : Dieu sensible au cœur non à la raison*' (this is what faith is : God felt in the heart, not

John Smith, *Select Discourses*, ed. Worthington, London, 1660, pp. 1ff

in the head). For like Pascal they distinguished sharply between the "order of the heart" and the "order of the understanding".¹ In the former are the substance and the real object of religion. That which lies without this order does not concern religion in its essence ; it is mere "pre-judice", irrespective of whether the judgment comes from the sphere of empirical and rational knowledge or from that of tradition and blind faith. If we would penetrate to the very source of religious certainty, we must diligently avoid both these forms of mere opinion.

There are *Idola specus*, Innate Prejudices, and deceitful *Hypotheses*, that many times wander up and down in the Minds of good men. . . . That which was the Philosopher's motto, ἐλεύθερον εἶναι δεῖ τῇ γνώμῃ τὸν μέλλοντα φιλοσοφεῖν we may a little enlarge, and so fit it for an ingenuous pursuer after divine Truth : He that will finde Truth, must seek it with a *free judgment*, and a *sanctified minde* : he that thus seeks, shall finde ; he shall live in Truth, and that shall live in him. . . .²

The emphasis in religious matters is thus transferred from the object to the subject, from sacrament and dogma to moral attitude and conviction. This sense of the subjective, however, cannot be grasped simply through knowledge or confined within any such limits ; for it comprehends the whole realm of intellectual and

¹ Cf. Pascal, *Pensées*, ed. Victor Giraud, Paris, 1928, No. 283, p. 112 : 'Le cœur a son ordre ; l'esprit a le sien, qui est par principe et démonstration ; le cœur en a un autre. On ne prouve pas qu'on doit être aimé en exposant d'ordre les causes de l'amour : cela serait ridicule.'—[The heart has its order ; the mind has its, which is governed by principles and demonstration ; the heart has a different order. One does not prove that one deserves to be loved by showing in order the causes of love : that would be ridiculous.—Tr.]

² Smith, 'Of the True Way or Method of Attaining to Divine Knowledge,' *Select Discourses*, 1660, pp. 10ff.

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spiritual forces. The Cambridge Platonists carry on in these fundamental ideas the tendency that had come into modern philosophy with Nicolas of Cusa. Between subject and object of religious knowledge, between man and God, a perfect and enduring correlation is now established. In his writing *De Visione Dei* Cusa says that God is for every man what he perceives God to be, and that the form of this perception depends on that of the individual. This principle recurs in ever-varying forms in the writings of the Cambridge School. The saying of Goethe, 'Wie einer ist, so ist sein Gott' (as a man is, so is his God), is perhaps first precisely formulated and developed in all its implications by the Cambridge men. 'Such as Men themselves are, such will God himself seem to be'.¹ Pure objectivity, the essential element which remains unchanged in all the various forms of the objective, can be achieved and assured only through such subjectivity. That which is subject to change, to alteration and development, is not this element as such ; it is not religion, but thought and speech about religion. 'Religion itself', as Whichcote says, 'is always the same ; but things about religion are not always the same. . . . The state of religion lies in a good mind and a good life, all else is about religion ; and men must not put the instrumental part of religion for the state of religion'. That grand and audacious speech which Milton puts in the mouth of Satan :

The mind is its own place, and in itself
Can make a Heav'n of Hell, a Hell of Heav'n²

was first enunciated by the modest thinkers of the Cambridge Circle. 'Heaven is *first* a Temper, and *then*

¹ Smith, op. cit., p. 5.

² *Paradise Lost*, BOOK I, ll. 254f.

a Place', said Whichcote.¹ Passages like these do not voice a spirit of rebellion, but rather a novel force of pure and profound religious humility, which has triumphed over 'the vanity of dogmatizing', (as a thinker closely related to the Cambridge School was later to call it)² and recognised this vanity as objectionable to and destructive of real religion. The 'living impression', the 'vitalis scientia' of religion, in which alone it can and should consist, is only to be gained from the combination of 'affirmation' and 'negation'.³ The Gospel is not a book, but a power ; a power active in the formation and renewal of life. Even the greatest theorist of this group and its foremost theologian constantly upheld this conviction. When in the year 1647 Cudworth was to preach a sermon before the House of Commons, he chose as his subject this fundamental conception.

The Scope of this *Sermon* . . . was not to contend for *this* or *that Opinion* ; but onely to perswade men to the *Life of Christ*, as the Pith and Kernel of all Religion. Without *Which*, I may boldly say, all the severall *Forms of Religion*

¹ Whichcote, *Aphorisms* ; cp. W. R. Inge, *The Platonic Tradition in English Religious Thought*, London, 1926, pp. 48ff.

² Joseph Glanvill, *The Vanity of Dogmatizing*, London, 1661 ; cp. *Das Erkenntnisproblem*, vol. II, pp. 398ff.

³ ' . . . the Gospel was not brought in only to hold forth a new Platform and Model of Religion ; it was not brought in only to refine some Notions of Truth, that might formerly seem discoloured and disfigured by a multitude of Legal rites and ceremonies, it was not to cast our Opinions concerning the Way of Life and Happiness only into a New mould and shape in a *Pedagogical* kind of way : it is not so much a *System* and *Body* of saving *Divinity*, but the *Spirit* and *vital Influx* of it spreading itself over all the Powers of men's Souls, and quickening them into a Divine life : it is not so properly a *Doctrine* that is wrapt up in ink and paper, as it is *Vitalis Scientia*, a living impression made upon the Soul and Spirit. . . . The Gospel does not so much consist in *Verbis* as in *Virtute*.' Smith, op. cit., Disc. vii, pp. 323f.

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in the World . . . are but so many severall *Dreams*. . . . Christ was *Vitae Magister*, not *Scholae* : and he is the best Christian, whose heart beats with the truest pulse towards heaven ; not he whose head spinneth out the finest cob-webs. . . . I perswade myself, that no man shall ever be kept out of heaven, for not comprehending mysteries that were beyond the reach of his shallow understanding ; if he had but an honest and good heart, that was ready to comply with Christ's Commandments . . . yet we are all this while, but like dead Instruments of Musick, that sound sweetly and harmoniously, when they are onely struck, and played upon from without, by the Musicians Hand, who hath the Theory and *Law* of Musick, *living* within himself. But the Second, the *living* Law of the Gospel, the *Law of the Spirit of Life* within us, is as if the *Soul of Musick*, should incorporate it self with the Instrument, and live in the Strings, and make them of their own accord, without any touch, or impulse from without, daunce up and down, and warble out their harmonies.¹

Here again, in the midst of the serious religious and sectarian disputes of the seventeenth century, of the political and spiritual crises of English puritanism, the old humanistic ideal of religion reappears in all its purity and power. The historical mission and achievement of the Cambridge Platonists consisted in their standing by this ideal unflinchingly. The language of Whichcote, Smith and Cudworth does not differ on this point from that of the thinkers of the English Renaissance, Colet, Erasmus, and Thomas More.

Undisturbed by all suspicions of the sanctification of heathendom, they maintain that he who bears within him the true spirit of Christ, even though he has never heard His name, deserves far more to be called a Christian than those who know and profess all the articles of faith in Christendom, and yet do not exemplify and realise them in their lives.

The English Platonists are of course not alone in this broad-minded attitude. The spirit of a liberal theology had indeed not entirely vanished from English theological literature of the sixteenth century.¹ Hooker and Hales, and Taylor and Chillingworth, represented that spirit. They looked upon the community of the church as a community of divine worship, not of dogmatic creed. There can be little doubt that the Cambridge Platonists knew the writings of these men. Hooker's work, *Of the lawes of ecclesiasticall Politie*, seems especially to have influenced the Cambridge thinkers. But in the very title of this work we can see in what consists the principal distinction between the rational theologians of the sixteenth century and the men of the Cambridge School. Hooker and Chillingworth seek unity and reconciliation particularly in the realm of church politics. The various parties within the church should come to terms and learn to understand one another. Liberality in matters of dogma should then make possible co-operation in political and practical matters.

¹ [A reading of 'seventeenth' instead of 'sixteenth' seems to be indicated by the context. For Hales's *Schism and Schismatics* was first published in 1642, Chillingworth's *Religion for Protestants* in 1638, and Taylor's *Discourse of the Liberty of Prophesying* in 1646. The first five books of Hooker's great work were, to be sure, published in the last decade of the sixteenth century. But the last three books of the *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, *Tractates and Sermons*, and miscellaneous writings, appeared only at intervals between 1612 and 1662.—Tr.]

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But this exhortation to mere peaceableness is not the essence and core of that tolerance advocated by Whichcote and Cudworth. Scarcely moved by church politics and organisation, these men always shunned active participation in ecclesiastical quarrels. When, like Chillingworth, they uphold the principle that nothing is farther from the spirit of true religion than the requirement of a particular faith, it is because they have endowed this principle with different and deeper meaning. For they are not concerned with the mere toleration of difference of opinion as a concession enforced by practical circumstances. They emphasise the right, indeed the necessity, of such difference. 'It is better for us', we read in Whichcote's *Aphorisms*, 'that there should be difference of judgment, if we keep charity : but it is most unmanly to quarrel because we differ'.¹ Diversity of doctrinal opinion is not looked upon as a necessary state of things which for good or for ill must be endured, but it is made the instrument of religious knowledge itself. Religious certainty should not be in the least shaken by this view, but it is deliberately put on a different basis. Whichcote declares :

Nothing spoils human Nature more, than false Zeal . . . because I *may* be Mistaken, I *must* not be dogmatical and confident, peremptory and imperious. I *will* not break the certain Laws of Charity, for a doubtful Doctrine or of uncertain Truth.²

The significance of sentiments like these in English thought of the seventeenth century can be fully appre-

¹ Whichcote, *Aphorisms*, including letters between Whichcote and Tuckney, ed. Salter, Aphorism 569.

² [Ibid., *Aphorisms* 114, 130.—Tr.]

ciated only by considering the paradoxical effect they had on contemporaries. On first appearance these ideas were greeted with violent outbreaks of the same fanatical zeal which they were meant to assuage. The objections which Tuckney in his correspondence with Whichcote raises against the dangerous lukewarmness of this type of Christianity are enlarged upon and re-echoed far and wide. A new sect name, 'latitudinarian', is coined for the Cambridge men, and in anonymous pamphlets the doings of these 'latitudinarians' are made the target of satire and persecution.¹ When Cudworth publishes his *opus magnum*, *The True intellectuall Systeme of the Universe*, this work, which aims to chase 'atheism' to its last retreat, encounters the absurd objection that it is a concealed defence of atheism, uniting all the atheist's weapons into one great arsenal.² Nothing is more characteristic of the philosophical milieu in which the activity of the Cambridge School is carried on than this objection. If the Cambridge men were looked upon by the advocates of the Enlightenment as religious reactionaries, by the Puritan controversialists they were considered religious indifferentists. Both of these factions were incapable of recognising the new depths which were to be opened up by the breadth of the 'latitudinarian' confession of faith. Indeed in all the writings of the Cambridge thinkers, it is not so much a matter of extending the

¹ Concerning the origin of the term 'latitudinarian' as referring to a religious sect, and the rapid spread of the use of this term, see the detailed account in Tulloch, *op. cit.*, vol. II, pp. 21ff. ; pp. 34ff.

² [This objection to Cudworth's work was first raised by Pierre Bayle (writer of the *Dictionary*) in 1705, when he published his *Continuation des Pensées sur la Comète de 1680*. For a recent account of the lively controversy that ensued, see Leo Pierre Courtin, *Bayle's Relations with England and the English*, New York,

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religious horizon as of penetrating into another dimension of religious experience. Differences of doctrinal opinion are not only tolerated, but welcomed ; for such freedom is the condition under which the pure essential core of religion can become manifest. Yet the Cambridge Platonists are neither deists nor, as their adversaries constantly charged them with being, Arminians, Arians, or Socinians. They are plain religious moralists, the central point of whose faith lies in moral and religious conviction.

Truth is Truth [Whichcote replies to Tuckney], whosoever hath spoken itt, or howsoever itt hath been abused : butt if this libertie may not bee allowed to the universitie, wherefore do we study ? . . . Everie Christian must think and believe, as he findes cause . . . yett cannot I . . . give-up so noble, so choice a truth ; so antidotical against temptation, so satisfactorie, so convictive, so quietive ; in so full confirmation, to my mind, of the truth of Christian religion. . . . And *too much* and *too often* on these poyntes ! . . . Sir, I oppose not rational to spiritual ; for spiritual is most rational : But I contradistinguish rational to conceited, impotent, affected CANTING ; (as I may call it : when the Ear receeves wordes, which offer no matter to the Understanding , make no impression on the inward sense).¹

We have here a new force in Protestantism, springing up on Protestant soil. Neither English Calvinism, grounded in the dogma of original sin and the radical depravity of natural reason, nor Lutheranism, which had deteriorated increasingly towards a rigid adherence to the letter of the law, offered any resemblance to this

¹ Whichcote, 'Eight Letters of Dr Anthony Tuckney and Dr Benjamin Whichcote', included in *Aphorisms*, ed. Salter, London, 1753, pp. 57.

force. To produce a true parallel to Whichcote's sentences in seventeenth century thought, one can point to no less a phenomenon than the Leibnizian philosophy. 'To renounce reason in matters of religion', we read in one of Leibniz's letters, 'is in my opinion an almost certain sign either of stubbornness approaching enthusiasm or, which is worse, of hypocrisy'.¹ More important, however, than this agreement in results, is the agreement in basic principles between Leibniz and the Cambridge men. The distinguishing feature of the theology of the Cambridge School consists in its employment of this principle even in the sphere of religion, and in its subordination of religious conviction to the law of sufficient reason. There can be, and there should be, no such thing as blind faith, that is, a faith which simply eludes examination and justification by reason. A limitation of reason is conceivable only in the sense that human reason could not attain to, or discover, the whole extent of all the truths of religion without the aid of divine grace. Yet, in respect to religious content as such, no barrier of this sort can be recognised. Thus the Cambridge Platonists admit—again quite in the Leibnizian sense—the super-rational, but they are most cautious not to admit the anti-rational. The '*credo quia . . . possibile*' is for them the exact opposite of any genuine religious attitude. Though the human mind is dependent on revelation for the full reality of the saving truths, yet it remains, nevertheless, the measure of their possibility. For if we disregard mind, there would be no measure at all.

¹ *Leibniz und Landgraf Ernst von Hessen-Rheinfels. Ein ungedruckter Briefwechsel über religiöse und politische Gegenstände*, ed. Christian von Rommel, Frankfurt am Main, 1847, VOL. II, p. 54. [Tr. from the French.]

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And those that talk so loud of that higher Principle the *Spirit* with exclusion of these, betray their own ignorance, and while They would by their wilde Rhetorick dissuade men from the use of their Rational faculties under pretence of expectation of an higher and more glorious Light, do as madly, in my mind, as if, a company of men travailing by night with links, torches and lanthorns, some furious Orator amongst them should by his wonderful strains of Eloquence so befool them into a misconceit of their present condition, comparing of it with the sweet and cheerful splendour of the day, that they should through impatience and indignation beat out their links and torches, and break apieces their lanthorns against the ground, and so chuse rather to foot it in the dark with hazard of knocking their noses against the next Tree they meet, and tumbling into the next ditch, then to continue the use of those convenient lights that they had in their sober temper prepared for the safety of their journey.¹

'*The Spirit of a Man is the Candle of the Lord. . .*' This favourite saying of Whichcote's, which he so often wove into his sermons,² remained the motto of the Cambridge movement. 'Reason *discovers* what is Natural ; and Reason *receives* what is Supernatural' ; but in both cases it is reason by whose free assent truth is, so to speak, sealed and certified. Hence religious faith, though not wholly derived from natural knowledge, must nevertheless be in accordance with such knowledge ; for man can only so far believe as he sees grounds for believing.³ 'Truth needs not any time

¹ Henry More, *Enthusiasmus triumphatus*, sect. 54, in *Philosophical Works*, vol. II, folio, p. 214.

² Cp. 'Eight Letters of Dr Anthony Tuckney and Dr Benjamin Whichcote,' in *Aphorisms*, p. 27ff.

³ 'Reason in a Good man sits in the Throne and governs all the Powers of the Soul in a sweet harmony and agreement with itself. . .

lie from Reason, there being an Eternal amitie between them. They are onely some private *Dogmata*, that may well be suspected as spurious and adulterate, that dare not abide the tryall thereof'.¹ Every objection to reason would, if sound, apply also to the Deity.² He who severs the bond between reason and faith, has severed the vital nerve of religious faith : 'To go against Reason is to go against God'.³ In such precise and unequivocal words is expressed the rationalism of the Cambridge School—and yet, to interpret it correctly and give it its proper historical position, one must of course bear in mind that that reason upon which they would base religious faith is rather practical reason than theoretical reason. The *a priori* of pure morality is the starting-point of their doctrine ; and from here they ascend to religious belief on the one hand, and on the other to the sphere of metaphysical certainty, to speculative knowledge of the nature of the soul and of the intelligible world.

It's a fond imagination that Religion should extinguish Reason ; whereas Religion makes it more illustrious and vigorous : and they that live most in the Exercise of *Religion*, shall find their *Reason* most enlarged.' John Smith, 'The Excellency and Nobleness of True Religion,' in *Select Discourses*, Disc. ix, ch. ii, p. 388.

¹ Smith, 'The True Way or Method of Attaining to Divine Knowledge,' in *Select Discourses*, p. 14.

² 'Reason is not a shallow thing : it is the first participation from God ; therefore, he that observes reason, observes God.' Whichcote, *Aphorisms*, Aph. 460. 'Reason seems to me so far from being any base principle in man that I think it ought to be recognized as existing in some manner in God himself. For what else is divine wisdom, if it is not a firm comprehension of the Ideas of all things. . . . This true reason exists in us either as reason in motion or as reason in evolution . . . and this in truth is participation in that divine reason in God.' From the Latin of Henry More, '*Conjectura cabbalistica*,' London, 1679, Preface (*Philosophical Works*, vol. II, folio, p. 468). To blaspheme reason is to reproach Heaven itself, and to dishonour the God of reason, to question the beauty of his image.' Culverwell, *A Discourse of the Light of Nature*, ed. Brown, Edinburgh, 1857, pp. 17f.

³ Whichcote, op. cit., Aph. 76.

CHAPTER THREE

THE POSITION OF CAMBRIDGE PLATONISM IN THE HISTORY OF ENGLISH THOUGHT

Empiricism

THE Cambridge Platonists never felt at home even in their own immediate intellectual environment. They were well aware of this, and on numerous occasions they were reminded that they stood apart from the philosophical trends and the dominant religious forces of their epoch. The consciousness of intellectual isolation increased steadily during their lifetime, and in the case of the real theoretical founder of the school, Cudworth, in his later years, it so far gained the upper hand that he gradually ceased to write. His principal theoretical work, *The true intellectual System of the Universe*, remained a gigantic fragment ; his chief work on ethics, *A Treatise concerning eternal and immutable Morality*, was not published until 1731, almost fifty years after his death, from his literary remains. From year to year the Cambridge men witness the increasing need for assuming a merely defensive posture with respect to the prevailing forces of the age. The waves of political, philosophical and theological controversy swirling around them break in upon them from all sides, and threaten finally to engulf the very existence of the ideas they represent.

As an historical mode of approach ~~on~~ it would be inadequate to attempt to account ~~on~~ personal grounds

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alone for the fate of the Cambridge School and its impotence in the face of the new spirit of the times which takes form in seventeenth-century England. There was of course no lack of such personal grounds. The heavy armour of scholastic erudition with which the important writings of the Cambridge men are burdened, robs their endeavours of all freedom of movement and of all possibility of immediate effectiveness. In an age when philosophical reading consisted chiefly in Descartes's *Discours de la méthode*, Bacon's *Novum Organum*, and Hobbes's *De Cive*, a work like Cudworth's could not avoid the appearance of a curious anachronism. For the *Intellectual System* offers, in 900 pages in folio, a refutation of atheism, and it examines and sifts with the greatest patience and thoroughness, but also with an almost intolerable prolixity, each individual argument and counter-argument of its thesis. As to the writings of Henry More, they not only exhibit the same stylistic defect, the lack of any sense of structure and proportion in the presentation of an argument ; but this weakness bears with it another, a lack of proper intellectual form. Logical development and the learned exposition of individual arguments run the constant risk in More's hands of abandoning the path of tranquil thought and catching up some fantastic conceit, which in its turn often so overshadows the central thought that one nearly loses sight of it altogether. In More's complete works his cabbalistic writings occupy no less space than his metaphysics, ethics, and nature philosophy, and the latter also show the constant intermixture of quite heterogeneous mystical elements. Yet it was less this specific defect than certain general considerations which impeded the efforts of the Cambridge School. It is not

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the fault of the individual thinkers that their work had but a very limited effect. It is rather the form of their thought, as such, their characteristic type of thinking, which did not prove equal to the new problems of the time, and hence was destined finally to succumb.

Two fundamental intellectual forces moulded the political, religious and philosophical shape of modern England ; their profound influence is traceable to this day in almost every aspect of English cultural and intellectual life. These forces are the philosophy of English empiricism on the one hand, and the religious movement known as puritanism on the other. Between the two there seems to exist a sharp antithesis, indeed, on fundamental questions, an irreconcilable antagonism. But this did not prevent co-operation. It was precisely in their diametrical opposition that empiricism and puritanism accomplished a common cultural task. Instead of obstructing and mutually irritating one another, they thrive together ; they measure their powers on a common field of battle and emerge with a new awareness of these powers. Such co-operation was only possible because empiricism and puritanism had from the first a common point of attack and a common objective. They were always inimical to one another but not antagonistic as absolutely heterogeneous and alien forces. It was indeed the progress of the conflict itself which brought to light certain latent fundamental assumptions common to both the disputing parties. What held them together from the first was the original impulse which motivated them ; it was the force which impelled equally empirical thought and puritan faith. Both schools of thought exhibit as much difference in respect to content as

sameness in the sustaining energies by which they are shaped and determined. Just as puritanism sets up the ideal of an active faith, so empiricism sets up the ideal of an active philosophy. They both reject mere contemplation and speculation ; both demand, for the truth they advocate, a new concrete and practical verification. Bacon has become in this sense the herald and precursor of the modern English spirit, of that spirit which, as early as the seventeenth century, entered into and diffused itself through all fields of intellectual culture—science as well as politics, philosophy as well as religion. Bacon himself understood the new philosophy which he represented, not so much as a work of genius as a ‘birth of Time’.¹ It was the time which peremptorily demanded the advance from theory to action, from mere knowledge to a practical control of reality. This was the point at which according to Bacon the goal of scholasticism departs from that of the new science, of the ‘*instauratio magna*’. Knowledge is to be sought only for the sake of power, and its consummation and final test lie in power alone. Just as all genuine knowledge lends power, so there is no stronger demonstration of the vanity and untruth of ostensible knowledge than its impotence, its incapacity to effect change in things. ‘Human knowledge and human power meet in one ; for where the cause is not known the effect cannot be produced. Nature to be commanded must be obeyed ; and that which in contemplation is as the cause is in operation as the rule’.²

¹ Francis Bacon, *Novum Organum*, BK. I, Aphorism 78, in *The Philosophical Works of Francis Bacon, Viscount of St Albans*, reprinted from the texts and translations of Ellis and Spedding, ed. John Mackinnon Robertson, London and New York, 1905, p. 279.

² *Ibid.*, BK. I, Aph. 3, in *op. cit.*, p. 259.

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Thus it is the rule of operation which gives the final and highest standard for the form of knowledge ; it is the *operatio* to which the *contemplatio* is always answerable, and by which it must be tested. In this inversion of values Bacon sees the real achievement of his philosophy, that which once and for all separates the modern from the medieval age.¹

Although the roads to human power and to human knowledge lie close together, and are nearly the same, nevertheless on account of the pernicious and inveterate habit of dwelling on abstractions, it is safer to begin and raise the sciences from those foundations which have relation to practice, and to let the active part itself be as the seal which prints and determines the contemplative counterpart.²

The primacy of doing over knowing, of the concrete over the abstract, of action over contemplation, forms the vital principle permeating all its details and determining all the special doctrines of the Baconian philosophy.

Along with this technological trend there is another tendency, of no less importance to Bacon's philosophy, which dominates all his thinking. One belies the

¹ 'For out of the five and twenty centuries over which the memory and learning of men extends, you can hardly pick out six that were fertile in sciences or favourable to their development. In times no less than in regions there are wastes and deserts. For only three revolutions and periods of learning can properly be reckoned ; one among the Greeks, the second among the Romans, and the last among us, that is to say, the nations of Western Europe, and to each of these hardly two centuries can justly be assigned. The intervening ages of the world, in respect of any rich or flourishing growth of the sciences, were unprosperous. For neither the Arabians nor the Schoolmen need be mentioned; who in the intermediate times rather crushed the sciences with a multitude of treatises, than increased their weight.' Bacon, *Novum Organum*, bk. I, Aph. 78, in *Philosophical Works*, ed. Robertson, p. 279.

² *Novum Organum*, bk. II, Aph. 4, in op. cit., p. 303.

specific form of Bacon's thought if one considers him as primarily a scientist and measures his achievement by that of the founders of modern science. Measured by this standard his performance is threatened with annihilation. If one sets Bacon's *Novum Organum* beside Kepler's *Astronomia nova*, or beside Galileo's *Discorsi*, the vast difference in mode of thought, in approach and in method is at once apparent. For the whole theoretical foundation and edifice of modern science is in part misunderstood and in part expressly denied by Bacon. The 'hypothesis' of Kepler, the 'mente concipio' of Galileo, Bacon must, on the basis of his central view, count among the 'false anticipations' which afflict the human spirit and hinder it from pursuing the one sure and fruitful path of experience. Instead of such anticipations, such theoretical presuppositions and basic assumptions, he would substitute that interpretation of nature which can be derived only from a comparison of the given.¹ This comparison, as such, is by no means conceived by him simply as a sense process ; but, as he clearly recognises, it involves an operation of the understanding. Sense, as such, is weak and subject to delusions and errors ; the true interpretation of nature must, therefore, begin with the proper experiments in which sense-perception decides concerning the experiment, but the experiment decides concerning nature and the thing itself.² If one considers more closely the way in which, according to Bacon, the understanding

¹ Ibid., bk. 1, Aphs. 19ff

² 'But all the truer kind of interpretation of nature is effected by instances and experiments fit and apposite ; where in the sense decides touching the experiment only, and the experiment touching the point in nature and the thing itself.' *Novum Organum*, bk. 1, Aph. 50, in *Works*, ed. Robertson, p. 267.

arrives at this decision, at a legitimate interpretation of nature, if one observes carefully his method of induction; one soon discovers that it has scarcely more than the name in common with that process of scientific induction which was employed by Kepler and Galileo, and in England by Gilbert and Harvey. Bacon's induction is not a scientific, but a juridical process. Its peculiar intellectual structure is fully comprehensible only when one bears in mind that, in all it says of the extracting, gathering, and sorting of single instances, there is less of the pure spirit of scientific research than of the mentality of the judge. The very style of Bacon's writing evinces everywhere this spirit. Bacon sits as a judge over reality, questioning it as one examines the accused. Not infrequently he says that one must resort to force to obtain the answer desired, that nature must be 'put to the rack'. This procedure is not simply observational but strictly inquisitorial. The witnesses are heard and brought face to face; the negative instances confront the affirmative ones, just as the witnesses for the defence confront those for the prosecution. After all the available bits of evidence have been gathered together and evaluated, then it is a matter of obtaining the confession which finally decides the issue. But such a confession is not obtainable without resorting to coercive measures. 'For like as a man's disposition is never well known or proved till he be crossed . . . so nature exhibits herself more clearly under the trials and vexations of art than when left to herself'.¹ This is obviously not the language of the contemplative thinker who is confident of the harmony between the human

¹ Bacon, '*De augmentis scientiarum*,' вк. II, ch. ii, in *Works*, ed. Robertson, p. 429.

mind and reality and entrusts himself lovingly to the pure revelations of nature. It is the language of the examining judge, surveying the means by which he can ascertain and, if necessary, extort from nature her carefully guarded secret. Such is the fundamental character of Baconian induction: 'For I consider induction to be that form of demonstration which upholds the sense, and closes with nature. . . .'¹

If one forms a mental picture of the intellectual atmosphere out of which the English experimental philosophy developed, then the inevitable opposition between it and the Cambridge School becomes manifest at once. For this atmosphere touched the Cambridge men in their innermost being; it was looked upon by them as the absolute negation, subversion and perversion of all that in which they saw the meaning and true dignity of philosophic knowledge. They take their standards for such knowledge from the classical Hellenic ideal; as philosophers they recognise no other goal and no higher value than the pure contemplative activity, the *νόησις νοήσεως*. Indeed their whole way of life is dedicated to this ideal. They lead a life of contemplation, of learned research, and of philosophic meditation, and they never seek to push beyond this sphere. They withstood persistently all endeavours to draw them into active life, into court or into disputes over political and ecclesiastical power. Henry More's biographer, Richard Ward, relates that More's friends once tried to procure for him a rich bishopric whose acceptance carried with it the one condition of a presentation at the royal court, but that he firmly

¹ [*Distributio operis*, *Instauratio magna*; cp. *The Works of Francis Bacon*, popular edition, Boston (Houghton, Mifflin), n.d., p. 42.—Tr.]

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refused both the presentation and the assumption of office.¹ In seventeenth-century England the philosophers of the Cambridge Circle are almost the last to represent in this way the spirit and ethos of pure contemplation. For justification they can appeal to that thinker who is their real leader and teacher as well in metaphysical speculation as in moral conduct. All action, Plotinus had taught, entangles us in the world and subjects us to its sham and magic, of which pure theory alone is free. True happiness does not lie in action, but in insight ; not in producing an outward effect, but in the inner disposition and state of the soul.² Even where the thought of the Cambridge School is directed towards the external world, where it seeks to construct a science and philosophy of nature, it remains true to this its fundamental attitude. For the Cambridge thinkers do not want to control, but to understand nature from within in terms of its own vital principle. They do not analyse nature into individual elements or into particular forms whose constitution

¹ Richard Ward, *The Life of the Learned and Pious Dr Henry More*, London, 1710, p. 59.

² Cp. Plotinus, *Ennead I*, bk. v, ch. 10, in Guthrie, op. cit., vol. III, pp. 689f. : 'To begin with, the man who is inactive may be just as happy, if not more happy than he who is active. Besides, it is not actions themselves which yield happiness ; (the sources of happiness) are states of mind, which are the principles of beautiful actions. The wise man enjoys welfare while active, but not because of this activity ; he derives (this welfare) not from contingent things, but from what he possesses in himself.' Cp. *Ennead IV*, bk. iv, chs. 43, 44 : 'Magic exercises its influence on every action, and on every active life. . . . Only the man devoted to contemplation can defy enchantments, inasmuch as none can be bewitched by himself. The man who contemplates has become unified ; he has become what he contemplates, his reason is sheltered from all seductive influences. He does what he ought to do, he accomplishes his life and his proper function' (Guthrie, op. cit., vol. II, p. 508). For the influence of this doctrine on the Cambridge Platonists, see especially John Smith : 'The True Way or Method of Attaining to Divine Knowledge,' in *Select Discourses*, 1660, pp. 20f.

they can investigate separately. Instead of this analytical method, they sought and required rather a universal synthesis. Such a synthesis they consider as attainable only when a bridge has been erected linking up the life of the immediately experienced ego within ourselves with the life of the All. Thus the philosophy of nature of the Cambridge School, in conscious reaction to Bacon's doctrine of forms and to Hobbes's derivation of all natural processes from the phenomena of pressure and recoil, goes back to the dynamic pantheism of the Renaissance. The Cambridge Platonists wish to look upon nature as plastic rather than mechanical. Instead of resolving complex reactions into their simple elements, they like to proceed from the whole to the parts, and show how the one original vital force governing nature is infinitely exemplified, yet not lost, in these exemplifications. On this point again they go back to Plotinus and his doctrine of the World Soul. Nature itself is subject to the Logos ; it is not, however, the pure essence of the Logos which we find in nature, but a reason submerged in matter and impeded and bound down by it.¹ The science of nature, therefore, in so far as it is carried on in the proper sense, is only apparently concerned with the world of the senses. It pursues a purely 'intelligible' goal, and seeks to liberate that reason which is fettered to the material world from its bondage and obscurity and make it clear and visible to the inquiring spirit as being of its own kind.

But for Cudworth and More the heart of the opposition to the experimental philosophy lies elsewhere. Though ready within certain limits to leave nature in

¹ For the philosophy of nature of the Cambridge School, see below, ch. v.

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the hands of that philosophy, yet they most emphatically resist its view of the intellectual and especially of the religious life. At first glance, to be sure, it would seem that agreement should have been possible in precisely this sphere. For English empiricism was scrupulously intent on separating the province of knowledge from that of faith and allowing to the latter full validity within its own sphere. Philosophy according to Bacon cannot guide us to the truths of revealed religion—nor can it bring us away from them. For philosophy and religious faith belong to different dimensions, and hence can neither encounter nor contradict one another. Theology must originate from the word of God and His prophecies, not from the light of nature or the bidding of reason. With the ‘little bark of human reason’ we can ‘sail round the whole circumference of the old and new world of sciences’ ; but this bark cannot bring us to the shores of divinity, of *theologia sacra*. The divine mysteries cannot be understood philosophically ; they can only be worshipped in silence.¹ Thus it is this very moderation and self-criticism of knowledge, as taught by the empirical philosophy, which seems to clear the path for religious faith and to insure it against all perils. But this faith which evades the guidance and direction of reason in order to submit to the authority of the church and its mysteries, is not the religion professed by the Cambridge Platonists. They are unable to draw any such line of demarcation between natural and intelligible being, that is, between the rational and the spiritual ; for in their eyes the spiritual is simply the purest and highest form of the rational. ‘I oppose not rational to spiritual, for

¹ Bacon, *De augmentis scientiarum*, BK. IX, ch. ii.

spiritual is most rational'—such is Whichcote's trenchant formulation of this viewpoint in his correspondence with Tuckney. Religion is the really intelligible and rational; that faith which religion expects and asks of us is not a burden to our reason, but reason's prerogative and highest justification. 'There is nothing so intrinsically Rational, as Religion is; nothing, that can so Justify it self; nothing, that has so pure Reason to recommend itself; as Religion hath.'¹ Bacon releases the province of religion in order the better to safeguard the dominion of natural cognitive powers within the province of experience and knowledge, and, more especially, to place this dominion beyond the challenge of heterogeneous forces. But to the Cambridge men this release itself cannot but appear as an actual surrender; for to their way of thinking the denial to man's highest spiritual faculty of access to the divine is to fall short of the true end of religion and to sever the bond between God and man.

The same conflict must always arise between the principles of the Cambridge School and those of English empiricism whenever consideration turns from nature to society, from the foundations of physical being to those of social being. And the same antagonism breaks out here presently; for it is one of the principal assumptions of empiricism that identical laws govern and determine both natural and social existence. Hobbes supplements the work of Bacon on this point; Bacon's view of nature is Hobbes's view of society and the state. The motif *scientia propter potentiam* (knowledge for the sake of power) becomes Hobbes's criterion of speculation. Political science should serve the ends of

¹ Whichcote, *Aphorisms*, Aphs. 221, 457 and *passim*.

political power ; it should lead finally to the foundation of a *regnum hominis* in this most characteristic province of man, hitherto least subject to rational control and given over to despotism and anarchy. This subjugation must follow basically the same lines as the conquest of nature. Just as Bacon demands that science, rather than 'resolve nature into abstractions',¹ should 'dissect her into parts', just as Bacon calls for the most exact analysis and the most painstaking anatomy of nature² ; so Hobbes advocates the anatomy of the state in the same way. For him the state is also 'body', consisting of individual parts and knowable only through the assembling of these parts. To understand the state, one must first resolve it into its basic elements and then reconstruct it from them. The result is a strictly atomistic theory of the state and of society. The will of the state, to be grounded in reality, must be deduced from individual wills and represented as the summation of these wills. A contract between individuals forms the foundation of the state. But if this foundation is to be firmly laid, if the state is not, when scarcely formed, immediately to break up into its parts again, then some provision must be made so that this contract, once entered into, becomes inviolable. In its origin arbitrary and submitted to the free decision of individuals, the contract once in effect must therefore in its continuance be permanent and unalterable. Through human choice something is created which henceforth ends all choice, which leaves no free scope

¹ 'But to resolve nature into abstractions is less to our purpose than to dissect her into parts (Melius autem est naturam secare quam abstrahere).' Eng. tr. Spedding, Ellis and Heath, *Novum Organum*, bk. 1, Aph. 51, in *Works of Bacon*, ed. Roberston, p. 267.

² Ibid., bk. 1, Aph. 124.

for individual likes and dislikes, but subjects these to inescapable coercion and absolute authority. It is thus the rigorous will to govern which leaves its impress on all of Hobbes's theoretical investigations and deductions ; and it is the juridical right of coercion to which all political and social existence is to be traced back, and on which alone it is to be based. But the Cambridge Platonists raise the same general objection to this picture of the state as against Bacon's *anatomia corporum*. They observe here again the $\pi\rho\omega\tau\omicron\nu$ $\psi\epsilon\tilde{\upsilon}\delta\omicron\varsigma$ of empiricism in that Hobbes thought he understood a whole, when he had merely succeeded in breaking it up into its parts. In reality, however, both social and physical being is strictly organic ; that is, it is not the parts that condition the whole, but the whole that conditions the parts. Hence the true significance of the parts can be grasped and determined only by their relation to the whole, and not by the reverse process. The state and society cannot be grasped and accounted for except by tracing them back to an original form of human community—not a form produced artificially by contracts, but one which makes possible for the first time all common volition, mutual understanding, and mutual tolerance among individuals. Agreement is primary, the contract is derivative. Without an original agreement any contract of whatever sort is meaningless and untenable. Hence the state can have no other foundation than an ethical *a priori*—an underlying rational and moral conviction preceding all written law. The opposition between good and evil, between right and wrong, does not arise, as in Hobbes, in and through the state. It is rather this opposition which establishes and legitimates the form of the political community. The

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positive law of the state can be guaranteed only by a law of nature which must be understood as both a moral and a religious law. If one takes away this spiritual support, then no accumulation or concentration of external coercives in one person would be in a position to insure the stability of the state. For all things composed of parts alone have a tendency to fall to pieces, and no mere external power can overcome this original heterogeneity and make a real whole of an aggregate.

In this theory of natural law which it opposes to the doctrine of the state of the empirical philosophy, the Cambridge School again has developed no new and original ideas. It is in general content to allude to the ancient models, and especially to the model of the Stoa. This thought receives, however, a more independent treatment when the problem of apriority is attacked in its full scope, when the logical *a priori* is placed on a level with the ethical *a priori* and both are considered and established from a common viewpoint. The merit of Cudworth's principal theoretical work consists in its achieving this universal form of reasoning. Once more the Platonism of the Cambridge School has proved to be the driving force. Cudworth goes back deliberately from the Stoic conception of the κοινὰ ἔννοιαι (common notions) to Plato's foundation of his doctrine of ideas. It is especially Plato, the logician, who is now appealed to as a confederate against empiricism and sensualism. The chief weakness of the empirical doctrine of knowledge is, according to Cudworth, that it starts from an analysis of sense-perception instead of from an analysis of judgment. Hobbes believes he is giving an account of sense-perception when he explains it as the mere reaction of the human body to an external stimulus.

But even if simple perception admitted of such an explanation, nothing whatever would be gained towards the derivation of knowledge. For the beginning of all knowledge lies, not in perception as such, but in the judgment concerning it. 'Then knowledge does not consist in impressions of sense, but in reasoning about them ; in that only, and not in the mere impression, truth and being can be attained.' This passage from Plato's *Theaetetus* ¹ gives the real motto and verdict of Cudworth's doctrine of knowledge. All knowledge is *actio*, not *reactio* ; it is free creation and association, not reception. For the mere presence of 'phantasms' in us does not in itself indicate any knowledge about them. The mere impression affecting the soul can never sufficiently account for our consciousness of this impression. The act of consciousness requires rather an original spontaneity from which alone it can arise. The flux of sense-impressions must be referred to and measured by fixed and enduring thought-patterns. It is only because we can think such unified existences, that we are able as it were to bring to a standstill the abundance of individual images in the mind, and relate them to, and compare them with, one another. No sense-object could for instance be recognised as a triangle and called such, unless thought were able to grasp the pure essence of the triangle and embrace it under a general definition. If judgment is to be possible, and therewith the beginning and seed of all knowledge, then a sensible subject must always be connected in this way with a conceptual predicate, the particular with the general, and the perceived or imagined with the

¹ *Theaetetus*, 186D, in *The Dialogues of Plato*, tr. B. Jowett, third edition, five volumes, London, 1892, VOL. IV, p. 247.
(1998)

purely abstract. The image or 'phantasm' is meaningless without the idea or '*noema*' by which it is determined and given significance. All true cognition is such an attribution : the recognition of originally known essence in the single instance or special case. Every attribution of this kind bears with it an original force and direction of activity ; it is an action, not a passion. Hence it is from such action, from the freedom of the intellect, that both logical and ethical concepts are derived. Likewise the pure categories of genus and species, of being and not-being, of similarity or dissimilarity, of necessity or contingency, as well as the moral ideas and ideals of duty and justice, depend upon this action. According to this view it is not the general that always follows the particular, but the particular that follows and is implied in the general. Genuine knowledge does not proceed by imitation, but by anticipation ; it is not a copy of the given, but 'proleptical'. The main object of Cudworth's doctrine of knowledge is to reinstate this significance and force of '*prolepsis*', and safeguard it against the attacks which Bacon had levelled against '*anticipationes mentis*'.¹

¹ Cp. especially Cudworth, *The true intellectual Systeme of the Universe*, London, 1678, folio, pp. 73off. Cp. also Cassirer, *Das Erkenntnisproblem*, vol. II, pp. 216ff. John Smith in his discourse 'Of the Immortality of the Soul,' ch. vi, writes : 'The Operations about Truth . . . are the true badges of an Eternal nature, and speak a *ταυτότης* [identity] and *σπασις* [rest] (as Plato is wont to phrase it) in man's Soul. Such are the Archetypall Ideas' of Justice, Wisdome, Goodness, Truth, Eternity, Omnipotency, and all these either Morall, Physicall or Metaphysical notions, which are either the First Principles of Science or the Ultimate complement and final perfection of it. These we alwaies find to be the same and know, that no Exorcisms of material mutation have any power over them ; though we ourselves are but of yesterday and mutable every moment, yet these are Eternall and depend not upon any mundane vicissitudes, neither could we ever gather them from our observation of any Material thing where they were never sown.' *Select Discourses*, 1660, pp. 97f.

We must now go back one step farther in order more fully to understand this conflict with the epistemology of empiricism¹ in its real systematic significance. Rather than simply recall the events of this conflict, we must seek the motives which animated it from within. If the Cambridge philosophers oppose empiricism most seriously at just this point, it is because they are aware that for them the really decisive question lies here, and that the life or death of their central view is at stake. It is in no sense an aversion to the experimental philosophy in itself which incites the Cambridge men to this controversy. They showed a lively sympathy towards experimental¹ research and the dis-

¹ In their defence of the *a priori*, most of the thinkers of the Cambridge School do not distinguish between the 'logical' and the 'temporal' sense of the *a priori* concept. Hence they argue not only for the *a priori* validity of theoretical and ethical principles, but also for the 'innateness' of these principles. In this respect they advocate essentially the position which Locke assails in the first book of his *Essay*. And it is quite probable that Locke, in formulating his arguments, was aiming largely at the philosophers of Cambridge as his real opponents. The union of the *a priori* with the 'innate' is especially noticeable in Henry More. 'Even in my earliest childhood,' writes More in the autobiographical preface to the Latin edition of his works, 'an inward sense of the divine presence was so strong in me that I firmly believed that every act I performed, every word I spoke, and every thought I entertained, must be known to God. . . . At that age neither reason, nor philosophic reflection, nor any instruction had taught me this belief. I knew it simply as a result of an inward perception with which I was originally endowed. If our present-day sophists should reply, that I possessed this sense because of my origin and education, since my parents were very pious and religious persons; then I ask why it was that I did not at the same time also absorb the dogmas of Calvin which my father and uncle, as also my mother, eagerly accepted?' This passage illustrates with typical clarity how little the Cambridge thinkers are accustomed to distinguish between the 'logical' and the 'temporal' *a priori* in the development of their fundamental thesis. Moreover, a confusion of this sort is not conditioned or demanded by the principle which the Cambridge School is defending. This is shown by the fact that individual thinkers of the School flatly reject the temporal and psychological interpretation of the *a priori*. Especially Culverwell, in his *Discourse of the Light of Nature*, explicitly opposes 'innate ideas'. See the edition of this work by John Brown, Edinburgh, 1857, p. 123ff.

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semination of scientific knowledge. Cudworth and More were both members of the Royal Society, and Joseph Glanvill set forth in his writing, *Plus Ultra*, a sort of philosophic programme for the endeavours of the Royal Society and attempted a broadly methodological defence of its research ideal. The contrast is here distinctly pointed out between the ideal of research and the contemplation which supposes that it can grasp and construe nature through concepts alone ; and the decision comes out entirely in favour of the experimental as opposed to the merely 'notional' way.¹ If Glanvill in his work points to Robert Boyle and sees in him the true leader towards a new and more profound form of natural science, More too shared this scientific appreciation of Boyle, with whom he likewise was personally acquainted.² Hence it is not the rights of experience that the Cambridge men contest, it is rather a certain philosophic narrowing of the concept of experience against which their protest is directed. What they advocate is a concept of experience which does not stand in a one-sided orientation to natural science, but which does justice to experience in all its functions, which beside scientific experience leaves a place for 'spiritual' or intellectual experience. To scientific induction, as set forth by Bacon, they oppose the rights of moral and religious experience. Such experience is neglected and debased, if, as does empiricism, one recognises experience only in the form of sense-perception and considers it as valid only in this form. There is experience not only of the sensible and the corporeal,

¹ Cp. Glanvill, *Plus Ultra : Or the Progress and Advancement of Knowledge since the Days of Aristotle*, London, 1668. Cp. also Cassirer, *Das Erkenntnisproblem*, vol. II, pp. 398ff.

² See More, *Philosophical Works*, vol. I, p. 223.

but also of the spiritual and intellectual ; not only of the physical, but also of the intelligible. For every true method of knowledge must undergo distinctions and differentiations within itself according to the fields of objects to which it relates. Empiricism seeks a homogeneous methodological concept of experience, but in so doing it fails to account for the variety and wealth of ontological determinations of experience. According to the being towards which it is directed, and according to the end in view, experience itself must undergo transformations and pass through a certain intellectual scale. For this idea the thinkers of the Cambridge School go back to Plotinus's doctrine of knowledge. From this doctrine they derive their demand for a 'pure perception', for an αἴσθησις κεκαθαυμένη. Soul and mind as well as the body have their own perception : ἔστι καὶ ψυχῆς αἴσθησις τις.¹ And this particular basic view of pure perception is maintained by the Cambridge men not merely in the sphere of the supersensible, but in experience of one's self. Such perception gives us access not only to the transcendent, to the being and nature of the Deity, but to our deepest immanent being. There is no need of a special mystical cognitive organ by which we may commune with the supersensible ; the ascent to the divine is accomplished rather by our own spiritual powers and the Logos which dwells within the soul.² The pure perception, for which the

¹ Cp. especially Smith, 'Of the True Way or Method of Attaining to Divine Knowledge,' *Select Discourses*, pp. 2ff.

² 'While Reason itself, or the sound and comprehensive knowledge of God, in which all Ideas and their relations are contained, is nothing else than a certain universal stable reasoning, how can there be any excuse for anyone having been inspired in so sublime a manner that he is puffed up and exalted above reason itself, or that anyone should regard his

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Cambridge thinkers oppose empiricism, is looked upon by the Cambridge men less as something supersensible than as something essentially and necessarily non-sensible. If perception were given only in the form of sensation, of an external impression affecting the senses, then all possibility of self-consciousness would cease to be. For what sense grasps and conceives is only the qualities of external things, not the character, states, and activities of one's own ego. We see and hear colours and sounds ; we do not see seeing and hear hearing themselves. Even when, with respect to content, we remain within the limits of the sense world, knowledge of sensible things is never a cognitive act of the senses alone. An original and independent form of awareness (*Gewahrwerden*) operates here which has nothing in common, and is not to be confused, with that form of perception (*Wahrnehmung*) by which we stand in relationship to the corporeal world. Even the mere sense-impression, accordingly, in so far as it is not simply the corporeal impression, but the consciousness of this impression, contains a genuine and indispensable purely noetic element. 'Nay, fancy and sense it self', writes Cudworth :

upon this hypothesis, could hardly 'scape from becoming non-entities too, forasmuch as neither fancy nor sense falls under sense, but only the objects of them ; we neither seeing vision, nor feeling taction, nor hearing audition, much less, hearing sight, or seeing taste, or the like.¹

intellect as placed above the natures and reasons of things themselves.' Henry More, *Conjectura cabbalistica*,³ in *Opera Philosophica*, vol. II, p. 468.

¹ [*True intellectual System*, second edition, two volumes, ed. Thomas Birch, London, 1743, vol. II, pp. 636f.—Tr.]

The same argument acquires additional force when we consider the higher spiritual faculties, memory, imagination, understanding, and will ¹. In its later development English empiricism tried to meet objections of this sort by putting inner experience on an equal basis with external experience, that is, by putting reflection on a par with sensation as an independent source of knowledge. But the difficulty is only apparently overcome by this procedure. For reflection, as understood by Locke, is formed entirely on the pattern of sensation. It is not an active, but a purely passive principle. Not only objects of the senses, but states of the soul as well, imprint upon the mind certain ideas, according to Locke ; but in both cases the mind can only receive, not conceive these ideas. The mind behaves towards ideas like a mirror which can neither resist nor change nor extinguish the images that arise in it.² But it is just this limitation of inner perception which the Cambridge School most sharply contests. For it regards such perception as an action, not a passion, as a principle of spontaneity, not of receptivity.

First therefore it is a Sottish Conceit of these *Atheists*. . . . that not only *Sense* but also *Knowledge* and *Understanding* in Men, is but a *Tumult*, raised from Corporeal things without, pressing upon the Organs of their body . . . for if this were true, then would every thing that *Suffered* and *Reacted* Motion . . . as Looking-Glasses, have something both of *Sense* and of *Understanding* in them. It is plain that there comes nothing to us, from Bodies without us, but only *Local Motion* and *Pressure*. Neither is *Sense* it self, the meer

¹ *True intellectual Systeme*, folio edition, pp. 729ff.

² John Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, bk. II, ch. I, sect. 25.

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*Passion of those Motions, but the Perception of their Passions, in a way of Phancy.*¹

Thus, whatever is perceived, is assimilated to the soul not so much by the powers and properties of that which is perceived as by the activity and agency of the perceiving subject. The mind cannot stand in relation to any object or pass judgment on it, without indirectly expressing its own essence and revealing its original nature. For the mind all objective knowledge is also an act of self-knowledge. In the system of empiricism there is no place for this acknowledgment of subjectivity. English empiricism in the seventeenth century has not yet reached the point at which it will resolve the knowing subject, the ego, into a mere 'bundle of perceptions'. But the Cambridge School clearly foresees the culmination of this development and guards against it in advance. It continually points out that it is the strangest perversion of the simple phenomenological state of things to make perceptions the presupposition of the ego, rather than the ego the presupposition of perceptions. Before the ego there are no perceptions, as such, as the elements out of which the ego is composed. Perceptions exist only for and by virtue of the ego. The unity of the ego is and remains the real constitutive condition for all sensible or reflective consciousness. Hence one commits an obvious ὅστερον πρότερον, if he thinks he can understand the sensing, perceiving or judging subject as an aggregate of perceptions; for what would the individual perception be, unrelated to mental existence and life as a whole, and without its characteristic reference to

¹ *Intellectual Systeme*, folio, p. 731.

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the ego? It is this aspect of perception which forms the original phenomenon and problem in which the necessary limits of all merely quantitative observation are most clearly revealed. Self-consciousness includes and unites all those opposites which in the factual world would be mutually exclusive and mutually destructive. It is a strictly non-spatial unity, and yet by a sort of omnipresence it extends throughout all space. Self-consciousness is the absolutely simple prior to all division; it is that being which is prior to all becoming; and yet, since it does not belong to multiplicity and becoming, it can stand in relation to and have knowledge of both:

Unplac'd, unparted, one close Unity,
Yet omnipresent; all things, yet but one;
Not streak'd with gaudy multiplicity,
Pure light without discolouration,
Stable without circonvolution,
Eternall rest, joy without passing sound:
What sound is made without collision?
Smell, taste, and touch make God a grosse compound
Yet truth of all that's good is perfectly here found.¹

2 Puritanism

If English empiricism forms the philosophical antipode of the intellectual world of the Cambridge School, yet this school sees itself on the other hand opposed to Calvinism and puritanism as the prevailing religious forces of the era. The development of the Cambridge School takes place in unceasing controversy with, and

¹ Henry More, *Psychathanasia, or the second part of the Song of the Soul*, bk. III, canto ii, st. 36, in *Philosophical Poems*, Cambridge, 1647, p. 148.

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stubborn defence against, both the philosophical and the religious opponent. As it attacks the sensualism and materialism of secular philosophy, so again, and with undiminished ardour, it attacks that type of piety and religious metaphysics which comes into the ascendant in seventeenth-century England, and finally into almost unlimited authority. The conflict with this metaphysics was all the more difficult to carry on because almost all the thinkers of the Cambridge School, through the intellectual milieu in which they live and grow up, are extremely subject to its influence. By profession, upbringing, and position in life, they seemed specially fitted and prepared for this metaphysics. With the exception of Henry More they all received their first instruction in Emmanuel College, Cambridge, which was a puritan foundation and had subsequently become more and more the real nursery of the puritan spirit. They were either placed in office, or permitted to remain there, by the puritan rulers through confidence in their strictly orthodox views. Cromwell himself seems to have known the leaders of the school, especially Cudworth, and to have supported their endeavours.¹ Henry More belongs also by birth to the austere Calvinist circle. His family looks with anxiety upon the boy's first liberal religious impulses, and seeks by every means to divert him from the philosophical direction in which he prematurely sets out.² Under such circumstances the gradual withdrawal of all the Cambridge men from the dominance of the sectarian spirit was an achievement all the more

¹ For further treatment of the relations of the Cambridge School to puritanism, see Tulloch, *op. cit.*, vol. II, pp. 7ff. ; 203ff. ; 209ff.

² Cp. More, '*Praefatio generalissima*' to *Opera Omnia*, 1679. See also Ward, *Life of More*, pp. 5ff.

difficult and remarkable. With the calm and proud words : '*Non sum Christianus alicuius nominis*' (I am not a Christian of any denomination), Whichcote resists all the efforts of his friend and former teacher, Tuckney, to bring him back to a strictly orthodox puritanism. More answered a theological opponent to the same effect. He would gladly profess himself a puritan, if by this designation nothing else were meant than the acceptance of Christianity in its 'naked truth' and in its purest form. But the more religious faith is taken in this sense, the greater the independence which it demands and concedes. 'I am above all Sects whatsoever as Sects : For I am a true and free *Christian*. . . . For it is not in thy Power to cast me so low as any *Sect* whatsoever : God hath placed me in a Dispensation above them. . . .'¹ This struggle waged on two fronts, against empiricism and puritanism, rounds out the mental picture of the Cambridge School. The most remarkable thing about this struggle, from both the historical and philosophical viewpoint, is that its various aspects and its various tendencies are only apparent. It maintains, rather, a strictly uniform direction. It is the same adversary, and one and the same spirit, that the Cambridge men engage as puritanism and empiricism. This is an assertion which at first glance may appear strange or even absurd ; for what could there possibly be in common between the English empirical philosophy and dogmatic theology, between knowledge and faith, between a most pronounced tendency towards immanence and a strictly transcendent religious ideal ? Was there not an incompatibility here to start with, which not only excluded all reconciliation, but all

¹ See Ward, *op. cit.*, pp. 160..

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mediation as well? Were not the Cambridge men faced with a necessary alternative? And were they not evading a definite decision by taking neither the one side nor the other? If one looked upon such a middle position as mere laxity, was it not a logical and justifiable objection to refer to and satirise the adherents of the Cambridge School as 'latitudinarians'?

Yet, if one takes into consideration the general view and the intellectual goal of Cambridge Platonism, no objection is more unjustifiable and illogical than this. For whatever attitude one may take as to the justification of this goal, there can be no doubt as to its unity and as to the inner consistency and coherence of its teachings. It was in fact from the standpoint of a firm and clear intellectual and moral position that the thinkers of the Cambridge School repudiated with equal decision the intellectual ideal of philosophical empiricism and the religious ideal of Calvinism and puritanism—and that they were justified in repudiating both. However little there could be in common between these ideals of religion and philosophy in respect to content, yet they represent undeniably a common form, and to some extent a common atmosphere. Both sprang from the same strictly practical spirit which gave its stamp to seventeenth- and eighteenth-century England. It was this practical spirit, directed towards dominion over things and men, which gave rise in Bacon to a new form of natural science and in Hobbes to a new form of political and ethical science. In both cases knowledge was looked upon as the organ of the will and defined as such. It was less for the sake of quiet contemplation than for the

attainment of material ends. The religious development of puritan England follows the same lines. Here too the same preoccupation with, and limitation to, the practical prevails. The attitude in which man faces reality and believes he can see into the nature of things, even on their purely religious side, is not that of quiet contemplation or of mystical communion, but of active usurpation, of conquest and subjection. According to the puritan view it is only through such subjugation of, and such unceasing toil with, the unyielding stuff of reality, that the divine is truly attainable by man. For the puritan that peculiar oscillation prevails in respect to the world, that alternation between attraction and repulsion, which characterises the spirit of worldly asceticism. The victory over the world is now sought in the midst of worldly things and there only can it be achieved. None of the goods of this world is to be treasured for its own sake, for such a treasuring would be equivalent to the worst and most perilous alienation from God—to idolatry itself. But even though God is to be sought in absolute sublimity, above everything worldly ; yet it is only in the world that man can truly serve God. It is only here that man can perform his religious duty and be assured of his religious destiny. The religious 'call' and the worldly 'calling' overlap, for the calling is the sole and indispensable criterion and warrant of the call.¹ Empiricism and puritanism, then, approach the world of action by quite different ways. Once reached, however, they never give it up,

¹ Cp. Max Weber's classical account of this spirit of 'worldly asceticism' in *Die protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus* (Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik, vol. xx and xx.), 1904-5. See also Weber, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie*, Tübingen, 1920, vol. 1, pp. 84ff.

but hold on with a death-grip. In the one case the world is seen from the viewpoint of immanence, in the other from that of transcendence. The world is grasped and assimilated in the one case through knowledge, through the observing and calculating understanding, in the other through religious belief. In empiricism the tendency prevails to subject nature to the will of man and to establish on earth the *regnum hominis*. In puritanism all satisfaction of man's natural instincts and all enjoyment of merely physical goods is spurned, and the significance of all activity is seen exclusively in the fulfilment of the divine commandments and in the magnification and dissemination of the glory of God. But the evaluation of practical activity remains the same under both assumptions. 'It is for action that God maintained us and our activities ; work is the moral as well as the natural end of power'.¹ These words from Baxter's *Christian Directory* form also the quintessence of Bacon's ethics and of his view of the world and of life in general. Puritanism did not deviate from this conception of life, but rather confirmed and legitimated it in religion. The severely absolutist puritan conception of God leaves open, however, the whole sphere of relative, mediate, and finite ends ; its transcendent ideal points towards the actual empirical world as the true and only sphere of trial. Industry and thrift are now raised to moral and religious requirements.² Hence arises that strange glorification and apotheosis of sobriety which is typical of seventeenth-century Eng-

¹ Richard Baxter, *Christian Directory*, vol. 1, pp. 375f. ; cited by Max Weber, *Gesammelte Aufsätze*, vol. 1, p. 167, footnote.

² In support of this position, see besides Max Weber the recently published volume of Max Kraus, *Scholastik, Puritanismus und Kapitalismus*, Munich and Leipzig,

land. The stability, the assurance and coherence of modern English culture are perhaps based primarily upon the fact that forces which are otherwise mutually exclusive, or which are usually in a state of conflict, were in this culture focused upon one point and thus enabled to combine and co-operate in the solution of a common task.

In the midst of these opposed, yet closely related forces, the Cambridge men cannot but look upon themselves as aliens and outcasts. For they are scarcely touched by the spirit of modern England; they represent, in opposition to this spirit of practical activity, another philosophical and religious ideal. For them philosophy, like religion, is derived, not from the energy of action, but from that of pure intuition. The genuine love of God springs from the pure intuition of God. It is this purely contemplative bent which leads them back again and again to ancient thought and keeps them there permanently. They do not look for new possibilities of action, but, turning towards the past, they strive to contemplate the clear and pure sources of philosophical knowledge and of religious revelation. This retrospection excludes them completely from the main tendencies of the modern English spirit of progress. To this spirit, antiquity became more and more a mere burden, a fetter, from which it was trying to extricate itself. Bacon looked down upon the culture of antiquity with all the self-assurance of the modern age, the age of inventions and discoveries. He asserts that if age is understood as a certificate of value, then this certificate belongs rather to the present than to the past; for it is we 'moderns' who have been through the school of time and experience and reached

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maturity in it.¹ Age, in the historical sense of the word, is the youth of the world ; the moderns on the other hand are truly old, in so far as the wealth of knowledge accumulated in the course of time constitutes the real mark and privilege of age.² This general conclusion is accepted as the criterion of all ancient philosophy ; Plato becomes the 'mad theologian' and 'bombastic poet', and Aristotle, the originator of all sophistical philosophy, who ruined natural science by dialectics.³ In this respect, too, the empirical philosophy seems to be the forerunner of puritanism. For, as experience from Bacon's viewpoint is enlisted against mere logic and dialectic, so faith from the puritan viewpoint resists the presumptions of logical reason and of philosophical speculation. As in the former case empirical inquiry is to be freed of the force of tradition and authority, so in the latter Christianity is to be protected against the contamination of heathendom. With increasing severity

¹ 'Again, men have been kept back as by a kind of enchantment from progress in the sciences by reverence for antiquity, by the authority of men accounted great in philosophy. . . .

'As for antiquity, the opinion touching it which men entertain is quite a negligent one, and scarcely consonant with the word itself. For the old age of the world is to be accounted the true antiquity ; and this is the attribute of our own times, not of that earlier age of the world in which the ancients lived ; and which, though in respect of us it was the elder, yet in respect of the world it was the younger. And truly as we look for greater knowledge of human things and a riper judgment in the old man than in the young, because of his experience and the number and variety of the things which he has seen and heard and thought of ; so in like manner from our age, if it but knew its own strength and chose to essay and exert it, much more might fairly be expected than from the ancient times, inasmuch as it is a more advanced age of the world, and stored and stocked with infinite experiments and observations.' *Novum Organum*, bk. I, Aph. 84, in *Works of Bacon*, tr. Spedding, Ellis and Heath, popular edition, Boston, n.d., p. 116.

² Cp. Bacon, *De augmentis scientiarum*, bk. I.

³ See Bacon, *Novum Organum*, bk. I, Aph. 26, ch. 2 : '*Temporis Partus sive de Interpretatione Naturae*' ; cp. *Works of Bacon*, tr. Ellis, Spedding and Heath, new edition, London, 1887, vol. III, pp. 53of.

the veneration of antiquity is now condemned and branded as paganism. To be sure, rich elements of ancient wisdom and culture flow into the teachings of Calvin ; but the culture of antiquity did not affect him vitally. If he accepts it, and employs it in the structure of his theology and political theory, it remains, nevertheless, alien to his central viewpoint—granted admittance, to be sure, but an element that is carefully guarded and limited in its operation. English puritanism firmly supports this attitude. Even where it follows the way of humanism, it takes strict precautions that the gradation of values suffer no reversal, and that that which is Christian be given unequivocal precedence over that which is antique. ‘Parnassus waits on Sion, Helicon on the fountain of Grace. Secular learning hath the use, if it be washed in the sope of the Prophets’.¹ The Cambridge Platonists are free of all such barriers and reservations. In their almost religious veneration for ancient thought, and especially for Plato and Plotinus, there are no religious scruples ; for their idea of religion does not stop at the borders of Christianity. They are not afraid to say that the good will of a heathen is godlier than the angry zeal of a Christian. These words, addressed by Whichcote to his puritan adversary Tuckney, express not only a fundamental contrast in atmosphere, but they appear also, within the general religious development in England at that time, as a characteristic and decisive transformation of the idea of God.

It is a widely circulated opinion that English puri-

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tanism has been the real champion and protector of religious individualism and that, through the energy with which it took up and defended the cause of religious freedom, it also prepared the grounds for the idea of political freedom and for the fundamental assertions of democracy in modern times. But one must be careful not to confuse the indirect historical effect which puritanism has exercised in this sphere with its own substance and nature. The idea of religious freedom has no place in the puritan world. Owing to its political environment puritanism was called to the struggle with the royal power and the English national church. But it is far from transferring the idea of freedom from the sphere of bourgeois politics to that of religion. In this sphere the strictest bondage prevails, and the demand for unconditional uniformity. The leaders of the puritan movement, Eliot and Pym, are quite inimical to the conception of religious freedom of conscience; they demand again and again the most severe persecution and the most merciless destruction of all dissidents.¹ Whichcote excites the gravest suspicions in his puritan adversary when he asserts in his polemical correspondence with Tuckney that the preservation of truth is God's affair, while the religious duty of man is fully exercised in the continuance of love. What can be more dangerous, Tuckney objects presently, than such a peace as grants to the most orthodox no advantage over Papists, Arians, Socinians, and the worst heretics? The puritan religion knows no such peace; it is a fighting, a thoroughly quarrelsome and quarrel-seeking religion. It derives the energy for this strife from the

¹ For details see Max Kraus, *Scholastik, Puritanismus und Kapitalismus*, especially pp. 139ff.

idea of God which it advocates and by which its religious zeal is constantly rekindled. God himself, according to this religion, is not a God of peace, but of might and fear. The outstanding peculiarity of Calvin's theology was that it conceived the relation between God and man not from the standpoint of love so much as from that of a rigorous justice. God confronts man primarily as a judge ; he stands before him in all the sublimity and awe of the judiciary office. For His word is unalterable, His decision incontestable. God's decision is not bound by reasons ; for every reason would be a barrier, annulling His absolute sovereignty. If God of His own free will has condemned the greater part of mankind and selected only the few to salvation without any efforts or deserts on their part, then both decisions are simply the expression of His own perfection, which cannot assert itself otherwise or more forcefully than in just such unlimited power. The puritan religion is built upon this pillar of the Calvinistic dogma. In the statutes of the Westminster Synod of 1643 which formulate the puritan creed, the doctrine of election by grace stands first :

Chapter III

9 *Of God's eternal Decree . . .*

No. 3 : By the decree of God, for the manifestation of His glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others foreordained to everlasting death.

No. 5 : Those of mankind that are predestinated unto life, God before the foundation of the world was laid, according to His eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret

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counsel and good pleasure of His will, hath chosen in Christ unto everlasting glory, out of His mere free grace and love, without any foresight of faith or good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature as conditions, or causes moving Him thereunto, and all to the praise of His glorious grace.

No. 7 : The rest of mankind God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of His own will, whereby He extendeth, or with-holdeth mercy, as He pleaseth, for the glory of His sovereign power over His creatures, to pass by, and to ordaine them to dishonour and wrath for their sin, to the praise of His glorious justice.¹

Yet this stressing of the unlimited divine power and this transference of emphasis to the side of justice have not only a dogmatical, but an eminently practical significance.² For the puritan faith finds itself increasingly forced over into the realm of mere legality, and confined there. The relationship between God and man is constantly changing from a purely religious to a juridical relationship. The puritans attempted repeatedly to understand this relationship through legal analogies and to describe it in terms of legal categories. This characteristic is already apparent in Tyndale's translation of the Bible. In his preface to this work Tyndale admonishes the reader to pay special attention in the Holy Scriptures to the covenants which God has made with man. For all the promises of Scripture were supposed to entail such a covenant : God promises to accord a certain grace, if His Commands are strictly

¹ *Westminster Confession*, 1647, ch. iii, sects. 3, 5 and 7. Cp. Max Weber, *Protestantische Ethik*, pp. 90ff.

² For a fuller account see Taine, *Histoire de la littérature anglaise*, eighth edition, Paris, 1892, VOL. II, pp. 312ff.

obeyed. Henceforth this conception of the covenant, of the legal pact, recurs on innumerable occasions. Formal legality, even in purely religious matters, becomes the principal criterion and symbol of conduct pleasing in the sight of God. The whole puritan movement is penetrated with and governed by this spirit of 'self-righteous and sober legality'.¹ Once more the development of English empirical philosophy allies itself with the development of puritanism in a most astonishing manner. At first glance there would seem to be no sharper contrast than that prevailing between the puritan religion and the thought of a Hobbes. Whereas puritanism, in agreement with Calvin, demands a strictly theocratic social order, Hobbes on the other hand would free the state of all religious ties and church tutelage and raise it to absolute authority over religion and religious sentiment. The positive law of the state is for him the sole source, and the only legitimate source, of religion. Fear of invisible powers becomes religion when it is dictated by the state ; it is mere superstition when it lacks political sanction.² As the most radical and consistent defender of English high church politics Hobbes is the political as well as the religious antipode of puritanism ; and yet, however much his views contradict all puritan assumptions, the formal grounds of faith are in both cases the same. In the one case as in the other, it is an absolute will based on power to which faith is subordinated and must

¹ Cp. Max Weber, *op. cit.*, pp. 180ff. A passage cited by Schirmer, *op. cit.*, p. 14, from a sermon by Thomas Adams (*Works*, London, 1629) is significant here : 'We are bankrupt Debtors, God is a sure Creditor, Christ sets all on his score. We are ignorant Clients, God is a skilfull Judge, Christ is our Advocate to plead our cause for us.'

² Hobbes, *Leviathan*, '*De homine*,' ch. vi.

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blindly submit. For puritanism it is the unlimited divine decree, for Hobbes it is the decree of this 'mortal God', the state, which dictates the law. In neither case has the individual will any right to find fault with the content of the law, since what is required of it is restrained submission. For Hobbes any resistance to the religious decrees issued by the state is rebellion; the law of the land determines also the limits of conscience—in fact it is the only conscience of the citizen. For puritanism not only every doubt regarding the divine decrees, but every question regarding their authority, every attempt to measure them by human standards, is presumption and disobedience. To criticise and cavil at God's decisions because we cannot through our reason understand how they are consistent with the divine goodness: this, as Tuckney stresses in his correspondence with Whichcote, is a return to heathendom, an appeal to that *recta ratio* which the heathen philosophers dreamed of, but which is nowhere to be found. Thus puritanism and empiricism, faith and knowledge, reach the same goal and conclusion from entirely different starting-points. Both recognise an absolute Being, which, as absolute power, not only limits the capacities of the understanding and will, but finally absorbs them altogether.

The protest of the Cambridge School is heard again at this point. They objected to no presumption with such passionate vigour as to the attempt to subordinate ethical reason to a merely external law, whether one understands this as the empirical law of the state or as the transcendent law of God. Cudworth speaks with unconcealed aversion of 'those dreadful decrees' by virtue of which God is said to be able to damn man,

apparently through sheer wilfulness.¹ Such a faith is to him the real negation and perversion of all religion ; it robs God not only of the qualities of goodness and righteousness, but annuls His very essence and substance. It is the kernel of all atheism. Cudworth's great work *The true intellectual System of the Universe* is devoted to the proof of this thesis. Its central aim consists in defending the idea of moral and religious freedom against any form of fatalism whatsoever. Such fatalism is not less pernicious when it appears in theological dress than when it appears in philosophical or scientific form and authority. The Democritan fate, which derives all spiritual from material being and seeks to explain all spiritual phenomena according to purely mechanical laws, is not more deceitful and reprehensible than that theological fatality which deprives the ideas of good and evil of all sense and value in their own right by deducing them from the absolute will of God, bound by no inner law. This 'divine Fate immoral', as it is called by Cudworth, is but the more immoral because asserted and proclaimed as divine. He who looks upon the ideas of good and evil, of righteous and unrighteous, as mere effluences of a despotic will, divests them of their deepest significance. They are, rather, intelligible entities in whose nature the actual and operative can

¹ 'When I was examining rather carefully ethical matters and I manifestly perceived that the natures of good and evil morals were altogether changeless, and did not in reality depend on the judgment of God himself . . . I was not able to ascribe to God those dreadful decrees (*horrenda ista decreta*), by which he inevitably condemned innocent men out of pure arbitrary goodness to guilt and sin, for which they are to atone by everlasting torture. . . . And from that time on a very large number of men at our university, influenced by the evidence of this one truth, have gone over to the camp of the Remonstrants.' Letter from Cudworth to Limborch, 1668 ; cp. Hertling, *John Locke und die Schule von Cambridge*, p. 164. [Tr. from the Latin.]

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change nothing. No power, not even omnipotence, can destroy these eternal and immutable natures, and make good bad or bad good. Considered in a purely formal light, it is true that something which was hitherto indifferent can by divine or human decree be made a positive or a negative rule of conduct, and thus acquire the character of a moral duty. But even in such a case the element of morality does not lie in the mere expression of the will of the lawgiver, but arises from his right and authority to command; and this authority must be based upon natural justice and equity. Every law that dispenses with this foundation is rightly looked upon as ridiculous and absurd.¹ On the old ethical question as to whether the ideas of right and wrong are valid *θέσει* or *φύσει* (in theory or in nature), Cudworth decides unreservedly for the latter alternative. The true νόμος (law) is no mere δόγμα πόλεως (decree of a city) but implies something substantial, self-existing, and valid in its own right, it is τοῦ ὄντος ἐξεύρεσις (the discovery of being).² It is absurd to think of this binding of God's will to fixed and eternal norms as a limitation, for this does not make God dependent on anything but that which He already is. In conforming to this first principle of morality, God is obedient only to the dictates of His own nature, which is determined by this principle, and without it would remain indeterminable.

The example of Henry More teaches that in this conception of the relationship existing between religion

¹ For Cudworth's presentation of this standpoint, see his *Treatise on Eternal and Immutable Morality*, especially bk. i, ch. ii, as well as the *True intellectual System*.

² Cudworth, *Treatise on Eternal and Immutable Morality*, bk. iv, ch. vi. For Cudworth's ethical theory, see especially Martineau, *Types of Ethical Theory*, vol. II.

and morality, it was not merely a question for the Cambridge men of a doctrinal system, but of a motif affecting and decisively shaping their whole lives. More has said in an autobiographical sketch that it was this theme which first aroused doubt in him concerning Calvinistic dogma, and thus gave definite and final direction to his philosophy and religion. He tells us that he was

bred up, to the almost fourteenth *Year* of my Age, under *Parents* and a *Master* that were great *Calvinists*. . . . But neither there [at Eton], nor yet any where else, could I ever swallow down that hard Doctrine concerning *Fate*. . . . Moreover, that I had such a deep Aversion in my Temper to this Opinion, and so firm and unshaken a Perswasion of *Divine Justice* and *Goodness*; that on a certain Day . . . *mus*ing concerning these Things with my self, and recalling to my Mind this Doctrine of *Calvin*, I did thus seriously and deliberately conclude within my self, viz. *If I am one of those that are predestinated unto Hell, where all Things are full of nothing but Cursing and Blasphemy, yet will I behave my self there patiently and submissively towards God* . . . Being certainly perswaded, that if I thus demeaned my self, he would hardly keep me long in that place. Which *Meditation* of mine is as firmly fix'd in my Memory, and the very Place where I stood, as if the Thing had been transacted but a Day or two ago.¹

It is with such decision and calm self-confidence as this that the ethical conscience of the Cambridge School rebelled against the fanatical worship of the mere principle of power.

We do not disparage the Almighty, or cast limitations upon omnipotency itself, to say, upon supposition of one

¹ See Ward, *Life of More*, pp. 5ff.

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thing, that another must necessarily follow. As, for instance, if God makes a promise, He must perform it ; if He makes a creature intelligent and voluntary, He must use him as such. . . . This stands to reason, and has the support of Scripture. . . . *There is that in God that is more beautiful than power, than will and Sovereignty, viz. His righteousness, His goodwill, His justice, wisdom and the like.*¹

We have now reached a point at which the Cambridge School transcends itself, as it were, and rises far above the narrow sphere in which its immediate historical influence is realised—and within which it remained confined. For a truly universal historical perspective opens up at this point. In its controversy with Calvinistic dogma the Cambridge School now occupies exactly the same position that Pelagius had taken against Augustine, and Erasmus against Luther. In modern religious history the triumph of Augustinianism on the question of free will and predestination seemed assured for all time by about the middle of the seventeenth century. On Catholic soil it is Jansen's great work on Augustine (1640) which becomes the new bulwark of Augustinianism. In spite of all the vehement attacks it encounters, in spite of its eventual condemnation by the Church, this work succeeds in releasing one of the most profound and far-reaching religious movements of its time in France. A purely dogmatic controversy once more spreads throughout the entire compass of intellectual and spiritual life. The theology of Port Royal does not stop with a revival of piety ; it endeavours to give a new form to the state and to society, and even, in thinkers like Pascal and

¹ Whichcote, *Sermons*, Aberdeen, 1751, VOL. II, p. 244. Cp. Powicke, *The Cambridge Platonists*, p. 79.

Antoine Arnauld, to philosophy and science as well. But the force of Augustinianism manifests itself with still greater strength and uniformity in the cultural history of the Protestant countries. Calvin's *Institutio* and Luther's *De Servo Arbitrio* concur on this point and exert again their entire energies toward this goal, the revival and unconditional establishment of the dogma of election by grace. The destiny of the reform movement seems henceforth inseparably bound up with this dogma; and resistance to it was looked upon as treason toward the Reformation itself. But even though Protestant theology yields more and more to the authority of Luther and Calvin, and thus to the authority of Augustine, controversy is not yet at an end. For philosophy now enters the struggle; and it is philosophy which first succeeds in awaking those forces of Protestantism which were finally invoked in order to extricate Protestantism from the narrowness of Pauline and Augustinian dogma. In the Netherlands it is Bayle and Hugo Grotius, in Germany Leibniz, in England the Cambridge thinkers, who deliberately adopt and persistently maintain this goal, all obstacles notwithstanding. Bayle, the sceptic, becomes a convinced ethical rationalist on this matter and a defender of the self-sufficiency of the moral reason. If anyone ventures (so he puts it) to give out, as a divine decree, a command which contradicts all our fundamental principles and ideas of morality, one must explain to him that he is following a false rule of interpretation: 'Better to condemn the evidence of his critique and grammar than the evidence of reason itself'.¹ It is this

¹ Bayle, *Commentaire Philosophique sur les paroles de l'Évangile : contrains les d'entrer*. Cp. Cassirer, *Erkenntnisproblem*, v. 1, pp. 590f.

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fundamental maxim which Leibniz takes up in order with its support to carry on the controversy against Bayle and to project a *Theodicy*, which in view of its ultimate purpose is intended to be a 'Logodicy' :

One cannot maintain . . . that that which we call justice is nothing in relation to God, that He is absolute master of all things, even to being able to condemn the innocent without violating justice ; or finally that justice is something arbitrary with respect to God. [These are] bold and dangerous utterances which some have been led to make to the prejudice of the divine attributes, inasmuch as in this case there would be no basis at all for praising His bounty and justice ; and all would be the same as if the most wicked spirit, the Prince of evil demons, the evil principle of the Manichaeans, were the sole master of the universe. . . . For what means would there be to distinguish the true God from the false God of Zoroaster, if all things depended on the caprice of an arbitrary power, without there being any rule or reason why this should be so ? ¹

The Cambridge School comes back again and again to this inalienable value of reason as the last criterion of morality, and hence also as the only sound norm of true religion. Henry More expressed this principle in the general preface to *A Collection of Several Philosophical Writings* with almost the same words as Leibniz in his *Theodicy*. 'For take away Reason', he says, 'and all religions are alike true ; as the Light being removed, all things are of one colour'.² In content and systematic significance the philosophy of the Cambridge School is

¹ Leibniz, *Theodicee, Discours préliminaire*, sect. 37, in *Philosophische Schriften*, ed. Gerhardt, vol. vi, p. 71f.

² [*A Collection of Philosophical Writings*, London, 1712, p. vi.—Tr.]

by no means commensurate with the philosophy of Leibniz ; but both fulfilled, nevertheless, a common mission in the history of thought. They form two independent movements tending toward the same end ; they are two important stages on the way leading from Luther to Kant, from the concept of freedom of the Reformation to the concept of freedom of idealism, from the principle of justification by faith to the principle of the autonomy of the will and of the practical reason. We cannot attempt here to trace this movement in its details ; we shall merely consider the question, in what sense the Platonism of the Cambridge School was qualified to clear the grounds for this movement and to direct its course. In order to answer this question, we must, however, extend the sphere of our consideration, we must endeavour to free the doctrines of the Cambridge School from their isolation and project them against their historical background, where one must keep them in order to see them in their full clarity and distinctness.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CAMBRIDGE PLATONISM IN THE GENERAL HISTORY OF RELIGION

THE force of the medieval doctrinal system, and the formidable power with which it has dominated the centuries, were to no small extent due to the fact that individual and general, subjective and objective elements came to be so inextricably interwoven in its growth that they could not later be unravelled without the most violent exertions. Both aspects of this system form henceforth an indissoluble unity, such that doctrine appears simply as the complete and pure expression of life, and life can be understood and finally justified only by doctrine. To understand how completely this was the situation, one must consider the stature of the thinker who stands on the threshold of medieval theology and from whom it received its decisive impulses. The dogmatic theology which Augustine establishes has, even for him, a double function, as evidenced by the development of his own life, and of his whole intellectual and spiritual existence. It brings his personal religious struggle to an end, and it expresses the absolute peace which he himself after a passionate search has found in God. This peace is not, however, to be understood as mystic intuition and absorption. The goal that he has attained forms rather a new beginning ; for now the achieved certainty must on the one hand be expressed, while on the other it must be fortified against any doubt from within or any attack from without. In

bringing this about, Augustine accomplished a task demanding extraordinary dialectical powers. He mastered all the conflicting impulses in himself and all the essential demands of his age and forced them into one combined form. This form had to express the turbulent commotion of that inner life whence it originated ; and yet it had also to be so solidly established that it could assert itself conclusively, and that it should not succumb to the assaults of the world, but rather prove to be itself a world-building force. The innermost and completely irrational forces of religious faith were now invoked to establish something in the highest degree rational. Religious faith should not be confined to the individual, but should be confirmed in a powerful system embracing all reality. It should reach perfection in the Church, and in this form control all natural and spiritual being.

But neither the individual nor the general task could be left to the merely natural powers of the mind and entrusted to their guidance. For the deception and helplessness of these powers formed the core of Augustine's own religious experience. The *Confessions* tell how he seeks protection in them again and again only to turn away presently in disappointment. The logic of Aristotle, the writings of the Neoplatonists, and the Stoic ethics, with which he becomes acquainted through the medium of Cicero's *Hortensius*, could neither lend assurance to his spirit nor give a definite course to his life. The flood of passion repeatedly breaks through all the artificial dams that natural reason, the *recta ratio* of the Stoics, seeks to construct. There is no inner norm of the human will ; but rather, so long as the will remains within itself and trusts itself alone, it is com-

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pletely at the mercy of impulses of sense without any hope of deliverance. Deliverance can come only when the will renounces and effaces itself, and yields to another power which is absolutely transcendent. Such is the beginning and the source of all religious knowledge. Augustine found his real freedom only after renunciation. It was not he himself who found support in his spiritual struggles ; he felt himself in the grip of an overwhelming supernatural power which subdued him with a single blow. Thereafter he is convinced that this is the only way by which man can attain to the peace of God ; and that the meaning of religious redemption consists neither in thinking nor in doing, but in suffering. Augustine saw the Pauline doctrine of election by grace in the light of his own personal experience ; and only in this light was he able to interpret this doctrine. And presently he turns it about and applies it to the objective field. The absolute sovereignty of the divine will, limited by no human norms or standards, becomes the point of departure for his doctrine of the unconditional authority of the church. The human understanding and the human will retain no independent rights either before God Himself or before the church, God's image ; for such rights could only mean the return of that stubbornness which must be conquered and destroyed by means of religious faith. One of the most remarkable and paradoxical syntheses is thus achieved. For upon the impotence of the will, as he has known it in his own experience, Augustine now constructs one of the most powerful human creations ; and through the renunciation of knowledge a sound body of doctrine arises which shall henceforth be subject to no doubt and capable of

no alteration. Escape from the world and dominion over the world, mystical longing for faith and a forming and commanding will, the fundamental teachings of Christianity and the fundamental forces of the Roman Empire, now interpenetrate. It is this interpenetration which has given the Augustinian system its real strength. For the most powerful historical influences are only possible to a great individual when he succeeds in the complete expression of the law and basic form of his own nature, and when through this form he succeeds in embodying a certain aspect of the 'objective spirit' and in asserting it as a super-personal necessity.

In subsequent centuries the doctrine of Augustine remains the decisive force in medieval philosophy and theology. 'The history of religion and dogma in the West,' says Harnack,

from the beginning of the fifth century to the Reformation, is so pervasively dominated by Augustine that one must treat it as a single period. . . . The whole of the Middle Ages in the history of dogmatics is but an era of transition : it is the time of the adjustment of the Church to Augustine and to all of the numerous impulses deriving from him.¹

It is only with the beginning of the thirteenth century that a worthy opponent of the Augustinian view appears within the church system. It is the dissemination of Aristotle's major writings which brings a new intellectual force into the field. The controversy between Aristotelianism and Augustinianism forms henceforth the central theme and task of medieval philosophy. A final reconciliation of these opposing forces could not be achieved, even though it seemed indispensable to

¹ Harnack, *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, VOL. III, pp. 3ff.
(908)

the inner unity of the church and was emulously sought. After Aristotle had been recognised as the 'master of wisdom', there arose an independent and original activity which claimed for itself just those individual rights which Augustine's doctrine could not concede to any merely natural power. Faith and reason, *auctoritas* and *ratio*, must now enter into a new relationship to one another. Within the realm of dogma Thomas Aquinas acknowledged the complete authority of Augustine, and Aquinas's doctrine of predestination differs in no essential respect from that of Augustine.¹ Yet the general intellectual atmosphere surrounding this doctrine has undergone a change. The emphasis in the doctrine of grace has passed from Augustine's '*gratia praeveniens*' to the side of '*gratia cooperans*'. The power of grace is not limited, since it still forms the beginning and the end of the movement which leads man to God. It introduces this movement and guides it safely to its goal. But between beginning and end there is now a middle ground within which natural powers are recognised as enjoying rights of their own and a relative independence. Natural knowledge is not necessarily subject to error. For this is the knowledge which on its part prepares religious faith and creates the '*praeambula fidei*'. Moreover, the fall did not extinguish in the human will all power towards good. If its power is weakened and diminished, the will retains, nevertheless, a natural inclination towards the true and the good. It is thus the '*regnum naturae*' which points the way to the '*regnum gratiae*'. Grace does not nullify nature; rather, it raises nature to its own level, and, finally, even above itself. '*Gratia naturam non tollit, sed perficit.*'

¹ For fuller treatment see Harnack, op. cit., vol. III, pp. 568ff.

The opposition between nature and grace has thus now become a series of degrees; and philosophic knowledge can understand this gradation as necessary, and can examine and justify it on the basis of its own fundamental presuppositions. From reason to grace, from '*lex naturalis*' to '*lex divina*', there is a clear and sure development. The power of reason appears everywhere as an ordering and regulating power, as the power of systematic comprehension, and as the power which looks forward to the divine. Thomist ethics preserves throughout this basic feature, and moral reason is also recognised as a natural revelation of the divine. The systematic development of this ethics can thus follow the lines of its Aristotelian model. Natural impulses and desires are not to be renounced; they are to be subjected to rational control. In spite of all attempts at the adjustment, mediation and reconciliation of differences, it is obvious how far we are now removed from Augustine's fundamental teaching. Jansen says in his great work on Augustine that the core of that doctrine consists in the subjection of man to the dark and unknown decrees of God, in the unconditional surrender of the ship of human existence, stripped of all oars and sails, to the ocean of deity.¹ But the teachings of Aquinas exhibit from the first a different presupposition. They hold fast the helm of philosophic reason and trust the compass of the moral will. Grace remains the effective force in religious salvation, signifying its final and highest reward; but, as '*gratia superaddita*', grace descends into a world which is not without a substance and stability of its own. It is in this change of attitude that the momentous accom-

¹ Jansen, *Augustinus*, TOM. I, LIB. VI, cap. i.

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plishment of Aristotelian doctrine for scholastic thought can be most distinctly observed. Yet the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas, broadly speaking, contributed no final solutions to scholasticism; on the contrary, it stands, finally, only as a grand compromise. That this compromise could succeed was due to the greatness and breadth, as well as to the insight and depth, of the thinker who created it. But in the realm of objective thought itself the two poles which in this philosophy had been brought into proximity by sheer force of the intellect soon drew apart again. Knowledge and faith, reason and revelation, nature and grace, are once more divorced from one another. In the development of scholasticism it is nominalism which denies and destroys the unity of the Thomistic system, which raises again in all its sharpness the opposition between the principles of rational knowledge and the mysteries of religious faith. The Renaissance and the Reformation carry to completion this work of critical resolution and disintegration. The Renaissance does this in the school of Padua by opposing to the scholastic Aristotle the real, historical Aristotle, and by showing through laborious philological and systematic analysis how incompatible the doctrine of the real Aristotle is with Christian dogma.¹ The Reformation tends towards the same end by trying to raze the whole superstructure of the scholastic systems, in order to find its way back to the sources, that is, to the Christianity of Augustine and Paul. It seemed finally as if Augustinian doctrine had triumphed over its great philosophical rival—indeed, as if it had emerged more formidable still from its controversy with scholastic Aristotelianism.

¹ Cp. *Individuum und Kosmos*, p. 143ff.

But when the great intellectual revolution took place within the sphere of philosophy itself, when Renaissance theology turned from Aristotle to Plato and sought in the latter a stable foundation, Augustinianism had to face a new and harder conflict. Ficino's *Theologia Platonica* comes at the beginning of this development and includes all of its intellectual and spiritual tendencies. This work, too, nowhere departs from the teaching of Augustine. Yet it measures this teaching by a new standard and approaches it with different questions. Platonic and Neoplatonic influences are everywhere apparent in Augustine's doctrine,¹ and, through the widespread effect of the pseudo-Dionysian writings, these influences remained perennially alive during the later development of the scholastic systems. But it was not until the beginning of the fifteenth century that the scholar had access to the Platonic philosophy as a whole, and thus to the full force of its influence. In the Middle Ages he could do little more than disentangle isolated bits of the Neoplatonic or Hermetic literature and adopt them in some modified form. The first modern scholar to obtain full access to Plato's works was Nicolas of Cusa ; and his universal influence on philosophy and on the history of thought is in no small measure indebted to this fact.² If one

¹ The evidence showing that these influences—as is generally accepted—are of decisive significance for the conception and evolution of Augustine's dogmatic system, appears to me unconvincing. I believe with Reitzenstein that in previous treatments the influence exercised by Neoplatonism in this respect has been greatly over-estimated, just as, on the other hand, the continuing effect which the Manichaean doctrine exercised on Augustine, even after his break with Manichaeism, is as a rule insufficiently recognised. See Reitzenstein, *Augustin als antiker und mittelalterlicher Mensch* (Vorträge der Bibliothek Warburg, 1922-3), pp. 28ff.

² See *Individuum und Kosmos*, chs. i and ii.

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traces this influence in the direction of the problems of freedom and predestination, one sees at once what the newly gained philosophical orientation must have meant for just this group of problems.¹ In the great controversy on necessity and freedom which the whole Renaissance had to carry on, and which was waged with the new intellectual resources, the Platonic doctrine of Eros and the Plotinian doctrine of beauty forged for the Renaissance its most effective weapons. The final solution of the problem of transcendence and immanence, of χωρισμός and μέθεξις, of the world of ideas and the world of appearances, lies for Plato in the position he assigns to Eros in his doctrine as a whole. Between the two worlds there can be no direct ontological community, and no mingling or unification. The spheres of the human and the divine, of empirical and intelligible being, remain strictly separate : θεὸς ἀνθρώπῳ οὐ μίγνυται. But some relation must, nevertheless, obtain between these two essentially distinct worlds. The denial of identity does not nullify the requirement of community, but makes it all the more urgent. Plato considers this requirement as satisfied by his doctrine of Eros. Eros is the spirit intermediate between the divine and the human. He is the interpreter who conveys to men the divine commands, and who submits men's prayers and wishes to the gods. Thus it is he through whom 'all is bound together', and through whom alone all intercourse and converse between God and man are possible.² And Plato leaves no doubt as to the way of the ascent : *

¹ Cp. op. cit., ch. iii, pp. 77ff.

² Plato, *Symposium*, 202E. See *The Dialogues of Plato*, tr. Benjamin Jowett, third edition, five volumes, London, 1892, VOL. I, p. 573.

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Evils, Theodorus, can never pass away ; for there must always remain something which is antagonistic to good. Having no place among the gods in heaven, of necessity they hover around the mortal nature, and this earthly sphere. Wherefore we ought to fly away from earth to heaven as quickly as we can ; and to fly away is to become like God, as far as this is possible ; and to become like him is to become holy, just and wise. . . . Whereas, the truth is that God is never in any way unrighteous—he is perfect righteousness ; and he of us who is the most righteous is most like him. Herein is seen the true cleverness of a man, and also his nothingness and want of manhood. For to know this is true wisdom and virtue, and ignorance of this is manifest folly and vice.¹

The Idea of the good is thus set forth not only as the end and aim of knowledge, as μέγιστον μάθημα, but also as the strongest bond comprehending all being, earth and heaven, the sensible and the intelligible world. To question the Idea of the good, or to limit it by an ostensibly higher norm, would mean for Plato the dissolution of being itself and the sacrifice of all human as well as all divine order for chaos. Plato's theology is thus based on self-reliance and on the self-sufficiency of the moral life. In so far as this self-sufficiency has its foundation in the will, there can be no absolute depravity of the will for Plato. The power of Eros constantly works against the doctrine of original evil and triumphs over it. The fundamental assumption of Augustine's doctrine of grace was that the human will, once fallen from God, can never by its own agency find the power to return. For it is henceforth deprived of all ethical principles and of all independent initiative.

¹ Plato, *Theaetetus*, 176A, in Jowett, op. cit., vol. IV, pp. 234-5.

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The core of the Pelagian heresy, according to Augustine, consists in that arrogance of reason by which this faculty still clings to some form of independence and some possibility of self-activity. This capacity has been completely lost. Reason can no longer be directed towards the good except as it receives its direction from without through the medium of '*gratia praeveniens*'. In so far as the human will co-operates in regaining grace, this will itself is after all a work of God : '*Deus ipse ut velimus operatur incipiens*'.¹ Platonic doctrine knows no such complete eradication of the will. For however sharply Plato distinguishes between appearance and idea, between empirical and intelligible, between becoming and being, and between temporal and eternal, there is, nevertheless, in all becoming the impulse towards being ; and even in appearance there is a yearning after the idea. This yearning, this ὀρέγεσθαι in Plato cannot be extinguished. Hence to whatever height we may raise the good, and however far 'beyond being' (ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας) we may place it as absolute essence, yet the possibility of participation in the good by any being, however limited, cannot be contested or denied.

In Plotinus as compared to Plato, the theme of transcendence receives still greater stress. Above the one he recognises a super-one, above the good a super-good. But the sense of the Platonic doctrine of Eros is also retained by Plotinus in a pure and undiluted form. The bond of Eros stretches from lowest to highest being. However far a particular being may stand from its origin, it preserves, nevertheless, the

¹ 'God himself in the beginning acts as we would wish.' Cp. Augustine, '*Of Grace and Free Will*,' ch. 33.

aspiration to return. In the human soul especially this is an innate impulse. So long as the soul is confined in the body, it is of course subject to the laws of the corporeal world, to the rigorous bondage of causes and effects. For every event is the result of causes. Freedom, therefore, in the realm of corporeal being and events is a mere chimera : one can grant neither the negligible deviation of an atom nor a sudden movement without its preceding occasion. But the soul frees itself from the wheel of time and fate in that it considers itself as belonging only incidentally to the corporeal world. The law of the cosmos neither binds nor constrains the soul ; for, although it has entered into and mingled with the cosmos so far as its existence is concerned, yet its inner nature is not prescribed by the cosmos. Owing to its inherent essence and to the basic tendency of its nature, the soul can create for itself actual, though not substantial, freedom. Although with respect to existence it cannot release itself from the body, yet the soul is able to take another direction than that towards the body. This change of direction accomplished by the soul within itself, constitutes its real freedom.

When the soul acts "conformably to right reason" she acts freely. Otherwise, she is tangled up in her deeds, and she is rather "passive" than "active". Therefore, whenever she lacks prudence, exterior circumstances are the causes of her actions. . . . Virtuous actions are derived from ourselves ; for, when we are independent, it is natural for us to produce them. Virtuous men act, and do good freely. Others do good only in breathing-spells left them in between by their passions. If, during these intervals, they practice the precepts of wisdom, it is not because they receive them from

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some other being, it is merely because their passions do not hinder them from listening to the voice of reason.¹

As the soul, through the Eros dwelling within, turns back to the being of its origin, this same impulse is active again in that which is above the soul, here also engendering a double motion. For all higher being strives on the one hand towards the absolute One, but it turns at the same time to that which is beneath it—not as if it stood in need of the lower, but in order by free inclination to communicate its being to the lower, and so to raise the latter to its own level. Thus the longing which impels the soul upwards meets with the assurance from above : ‘the clouds incline to yearning love’. This care of the higher for the lower is by no means a diminution of the perfection of the former :

Communicating to the body essence and perfection is therefore, for the soul, not an unmixed evil ; because the providential care granted to an inferior nature does not hinder him who grants it from himself remaining in a state of perfection. In the universe there are, indeed, two kinds of providences. The first providence regulates everything in a royal manner, without performing any actions, or observing the details. The second, operating somewhat like an artisan, adjusts its creative power to the inferior nature of creatures by getting in contact with them.²

Such contamination cannot affect higher being, but it is equally powerless over the rational soul in so far as

¹ Plotinus, ‘Of Fate,’ *Ennead III*, BK. I, ch. 10 ; cp. Guthrie, op. cit., VOL. I, pp. 98f.

² Plotinus, *Ennead IV*, BK. VIII, ch. 2 ; cp. Guthrie, op. cit., VOL. I, p. 122.

this turns towards and participates in the world of things in the right way.

By raising her glance to what is superior to her, she thinks ; by bringing them down to herself, she preserves herself ; by lowering them to what is inferior to her, she adorns it, administers it, and governs it. . . . Besides, as it is an eternal law of nature that this being acts and suffers in that manner, we may, without contradiction or violence to the truth, assert that the being who descends from his rank to assist some lower thing is sent by the divinity. . . . Thus, although the soul have a divine nature [or 'being'] though she originate in the intelligible world, she enters into a body. Being a lower divinity, she descends here below by a voluntary inclination, for the purpose of developing her power, and to adorn what is below her.¹

The doctrine of Eros has here acquired a new and decisive function. Now it is the function of Eros to establish the final sanction and justification of the world in this apparently other-worldly system, wholly pre-occupied with the transcendent. This form of 'cosmodicy', this justification of the world through Eros, is the specifically Greek feature of Plotinus's doctrine ; it shows the motif by which his philosophy, for all its affinities in point of content with the ideas and feelings of the oriental religions of deliverance, stands fundamentally distinct from them. This difference becomes nowhere so manifest as in the controversy Plotinus wages against the Christian gnostics. To him their contempt for the world is equivalent to a contempt for the divine itself, since it implies contempt for Eros and

¹ Plotinus, *Ennead IV*, bk. viii, chs. 3, 5 ; cp. Guthrie, *op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 125, 128.

for beauty. The phenomenal world is a copy, not an original ; but as such it possesses the highest perfection that could be given to mediate and derived being. He who reviles the nature of the world, knows not what he is doing nor how far the sound of his blasphemy may carry.

Could any musician who had once grasped the intelligible harmonies hear that of sense-sounds without profound emotion ? What skilful geometrician or arithmetician will fail to enjoy symmetry, order and proportion, in the objects that meet his view ? . . . One rises to the intelligible by seeing a shining image of beauty glowing in a human face. Heavy and senseless must be that mind which could contemplate all the visible beauties, this harmony, and this imposing arrangement, this grand panoramic view furnished by the stars in spite of their distance, without being stirred to enthusiasm, and admiration of their splendour and magnificence. He who can fail to experience such feelings must have failed to observe sense-objects, or know even less the intelligible world.

By scorning the world, its divinities and other beautiful things, one does not become a good man. When one loves somebody, one also loves those who are near to him—for example, a man's children. If one scorns beings so near to those in the front rank, it can only be because one's knowledge of them consists merely of empty words.¹ Plotinus has here drawn a sharp distinction between the original and genuine Platonic doctrine of Eros and beauty and that which he felt to be a dogmatic denial and falsification of that

¹ Plotinus, *Against the Gnostics*, *Ennead II*, bk. ix, ch. 16 ; cp Guthrie, *op. cit.*, vol. II, pp. 630-2.

doctrine.¹ He remains the representative of the classical Greek spirit, which, even when asking deliverance from the world of sense, does not look upon this world as burdened with the defilement of original sin. There is no absolute depravity of the human will; for the original nobility of the will, which lies in its autonomy, is not lost through contact with the world of sense. The descent of the soul into this world is no mere fall, because it is in harmony with the general cosmic design of the Creator. It is rather a mission entrusted to the soul. As the will is justified by its self-sufficiency, so the world is justified by its beauty. Beauty is the proof of the world's unalterable participation in the idea, and corporeal beauty is after all but the visible evidence that the idea has entered into the appearance, and form into matter, imbuing the latter with its power.² It is in this connection that Plotinus appeals to the words of Plato that the cosmos is a blessed god endowed by the Creator with soul that the world might be full of spirits.³ Eros is again the real cosmic bond, the intelligible centre, towards which spiritual and corporeal being, the higher as well as the lower, all tend as towards a common meeting-place.

It is, then, this basic phase of the teachings of Plato and Plotinus which exerted the strongest influence on the Renaissance. Every attempt to revive or reconstruct

¹ 'The doctrines of these (Gnostics) are partly stolen from Plato, while the remainder, which were invented merely to form their own individual system, are innovations contrary to truth. . . . They imagine that they alone have rightly conceived of intelligible nature, while Plato and many other divine intellects never attained thereto.' *Ibid.*, bk. ix, ch. 6; cp. Guthrie, *op. cit.*, vol. II, pp. 609f.

² Cp. 'Of Beauty,' *Ennead I*, bk. vi, ch. 2; cp. Guthrie, *op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 42f.

³ *Ennead IV*, bk. viii, 'Of the Descent of the Soul into the Body,' chs. 1 and 2; cp. Guthrie, *op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 173-23.

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Platonism starts at this point. The total accomplishment of the Florentine Academy, comprehensive as it is, can be condensed to this. The Platonic doctrine of Eros and the Platonic doctrine of beauty stand as the nucleus of the philosophy of the Florentine Circle. The epistemology and metaphysics, the ethics and theology, of the Florentine School are all simply variations on this one great theme. Ficino's work on the Platonic theology did not influence his contemporaries or their successors so powerfully and directly as did his commentary on Plato's *Symposium*, in which the main emphasis is deliberately centred on this theme. How far Plato's *Symposium* permeated and determined the whole intellectual atmosphere of the Florentine Circle can be judged from the conversations recorded by Landino in his *Disputationes Camaldulenses*. One can now see how this doctrine gradually affects and inwardly transforms Christian dogmatics. Open rupture does not of course occur at this stage of things. The use of the doctrine of Eros as a weapon against Christian theology comes much later with Giordano Bruno. Ficino and Pico della Mirandola do not want conflict but reconciliation. They are the faithful guardians of a tradition which they do not desire to dispute, but rather to fortify and preserve. But now, at first almost unnoticed, the severe bondage of Augustinian dogma commences little by little to relax. Although its personal veneration for Augustine remains undiminished, a tinge of Pelagian spirit colours all the writings of the Florentine Circle. The Jansenist Feydeau once said, in a discussion of the main points of the Augustinian doctrine of grace, that the worst error of Pelagianism is that, under the pretence of saving

man's freedom, it exalted him above God Himself. For, if Pelagianism were right, morality would be man's own achievement. But how much more is such a creation of goodness and virtue in man than his merely physical creation to which this doctrine limits the divine agency !¹ Something of this feeling, of this characteristic egoism, runs through all the typical creations of the Renaissance. Even for such a strictly orthodox mind as Pico, the real dignity of man consists in that he is not simply the creation of a force beyond himself, but that he has to, and can, create himself—that man can be and should be his own free maker and master. This plastic elemental power is now esteemed as the highest endowment of mankind. According to the general view of the Florentine Circle this power works both ethically and aesthetically. It is the shaper of the will, as it is the artistic shaper of the world ; it asserts itself in the elevation of the soul to God, as in its toil and concern for earthly things. This view is developed and established in complete agreement with Plotinus. It is the privilege of the soul that in order to contemplate higher being it need not break violently away from lower being ; and that, owing to the same primal impulse of love, it looks upward with faith and downward with care. '*Animus nunquam cogitur aliunde, sed amore se mergit in corpus, amore se mergit e corpore.*'² Here is shattered one of the fundamental presuppositions of Augustinian dogma, the doctrine of the incurable corruption of the will, which by the fall has been diverted and cut off from its source for all time. The

¹ Cp. Sainte Beuve, *Histoire de Port-Royal*, Paris, 1840-60, VOL. II, pp. 533ff.

² Ficino, *Theologia Platonica*, LIB. XVI, cap. vii. Cp. Cassirer, *Individuum und Kosmos*, pp. 88ff., 138ff.

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will must be able by its own power to find its way to itself ; for it is only in so finding itself that it finds God. This was the inference that Nicolas of Cusa had already drawn. In his writing, *De Visione Dei*, God says to the human soul : 'Sis tu tuus et ego ero tuus'.¹ For Nicolas, as for the Florentine Circle, there arises from this new security which the ego has found within itself the possibility of turning to the world in free devotion, unhampered by dogma. According to his theory of knowledge, the understanding should not flee from the sense-world. It must seek this world in order there to develop and acquire confidence in its own powers.² The earth is no longer the leaven of the world, the spectacle of human misery and sin ; it now becomes the '*stella nobilis*', harmoniously adapting itself to the cosmos and the divine order of the whole.³ A new kind and direction of redemption of the world was thus attained. In the teachings of Thomas Aquinas, philosophic reflection, based on the authority of Aristotle, had tried in vain to break the spell of the Augustinian doctrine of original sin. A solution is now reached, however, in the Platonic doctrine of love and the Plotinian doctrine of beauty. The mind may devote itself to the beauty of the world without having to fear the loss of its centre ; for this centre should not remain locked within itself, but should prove and assert itself precisely in its inclusiveness, in its universal scope and openness.

The fundamental doctrines of the Florentine Academy reached England by two different channels, and their influence developed in two different in-

¹ Cp. Cassirer, op. cit., pp. 69ff.

² Nicolas of Cusa (Cusanus), *De mente*, cap. 5 ; *De conjecturis* II, II, xvi, and *passim*.

³ Cusa, *De docta ignorantia*, II, xii.

Intellectual media. On the one hand, the new Platonism that had sprung up in Italy proved to be one of the strongest forces in the revival of poetry in England during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. English poetry not only drew from it a certain group of themes, which it subsequently modified little by little ; but it owes to Platonism its new conception of poetry itself—of its spiritual mission and moral worth. On the other hand was an influence running parallel to the former which remained at first within a narrower province, but was none the less insistent. The form of humanistic education and religion which is disseminated from Oxford after the end of the fifteenth century bears the insignia of Florentine Platonism. On his return from Italy in 1496 Colet begins his career at Oxford with a lecture on the Pauline Epistles.¹ In so doing he commences at the same point whence Augustine had developed his general conception of grace and predestination. But he now stands in a different and substantially freer relationship to Paul and the Scriptures as a whole. For he considers Scripture not from the dogmatic, but from the historical standpoint. He is not trying to derive from it a system of theology, but merely to experience and revitalise the pure original form of the Christian faith as it stood before all theology and independently of all scholastic commentary and interpretation. This freedom of treatment, this emancipation from all intermediate sources, serves Colet also in his treatment of Augustine. The latter is no longer an unqualified authority. Colet much prefers to go back to the Greek fathers, especially to Origen. In a letter sketching Colet's life and learning, Erasmus

¹ See above, p. 12.

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expressly points out this opposition to Augustine.¹ There can be no doubt that it was Augustine's stand on the problems of free will and grace which aroused and constantly nourished this opposition. Colet treated both problems consistently from the viewpoints revealed to him in the Florentine philosophy. With a decision such as one scarcely finds even in Ficino and Pico, he removes from the doctrine of grace its purely irrational and supranaturalist elements. Thus he arrives at the conception by virtue of which divine grace appears to him but another expression for divine love. God's love towards men does not require any other additional decree ; it is in itself their call, justification and election. When we say that God has called and elected certain men, this means simply that they require the love with which God loves them. Election by grace is thus no force from without, no '*vis illata*' ; for nothing is farther from an act of God than coercion. Election is rather the natural longing and the natural will of man which so mysteriously accompanies the divine will and providence, and stands with both in such remarkable accord that all that man wills and does, God knew before, and all that God knew, necessarily came to pass.² This is the intellectual atmosphere which Erasmus found on his first visit to England. From this time on he remains an intimate friend of Colet. Like the latter he continues from an early period to resist the overwhelming influence of Augustine and to demand a return from him to the Greek sources. 'One page of Origen', he writes to Thomas More,, 'teaches more

¹ '*Inter veteres nulli erat iniquior quam Augustino*'—(among the ancients none was worse than Augustine).

² Colet's lectures on the Epistle to the Romans. See Seebohm, *The Oxford Reformers*, p. 37 note.

Christian philosophy than ten of Augustine'.¹ For Erasmus sees the goal of Christianity, not in the suppression and destruction of the human will, but in the education, the 'discipline of the will', as he has described it in his *Enchiridion Militis Christiani*. All of his religious and pedagogical activities are subordinated to this ideal. In his writing on the education of youth, done at Colet's request, his basic assumption is that, just as the bird is born for flying, the dog for hunting, and the horse for running, so man is born for virtue and philosophy.² It was of course a misconstruction of the deepest religious motives of Augustine's doctrine of grace, when Erasmus in the preface to his edition of the New Testament went so far as to refer to the doctrine of original sin as a theological hypothesis—of which Augustine had made far too great use—as an hypothesis which in this passage he expressly compared to the working hypothesis of astronomy, such for example as the Ptolemaic theory of epicycles. Luther's vehement opposition to this view was a foregone conclusion ; and soon after, through the agency of Spalatin, long before the outbreak of the real controversy with Erasmus, Luther violently protested against any such vitiation of the fundamental dogma of Augustine.³ In the face of this peril he felt compelled to defend the Augustinian dogma in all its inexorable severity. In this way that great counter-movement, which had been introduced by Renaissance Platonism, was stamped for all time

¹ Cp. Seebohm, *op. cit.*, p. 437.

² Cp. Dermenghem, *Thomas Morus et les Utopistes de la Renaissance*, Paris,

³ Concerning these beginnings of the controversy between Luther and Erasmus, see fuller treatment in Seebohm, *op. cit.*, pp. 402ff. An account of Spalatin's letter to Erasmus is given here.

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among Protestants with the blot of irreligion ; and the breach between the Reformation and humanism became complete and final. Belief in any independent power of the human will again appears as the indubitable sign of unbelief in God. The human will stands between God and the Devil like a horse which must have a rider.

If God rides, the will goes where He wishes. If Satan rides, the will goes where Satan wishes. It is not free to choose the one or the other and to run to him. For they themselves quarrel over the matter of who is to have possession of the human will.¹

In sixteenth-century English culture, however, the religious atmosphere of the Renaissance not only asserts itself, but presses forward ever more triumphantly. Thomas More in his *Utopia* attempts to oppose to the system of dogmatic theology an entirely new form of religion. He outlines here the ideal of religion without dogma as the purest and best worship of the divine being. More also revives Plato's doctrine of Eros and Plotinus's doctrine of beauty. The cult of the beautiful is not confined to intelligible beauty, to the νοητὸν κάλλος, but includes especially the corporeal sense-world as well. Thomas More once said that the right prayer to the Creator consisted in thanking Him for putting the divinely beautiful human soul in such a divinely beautiful body.² The religion and morals of the Utopians follow this rule. They represent a most

¹ [Luther, *De servo arbitrio*, tr. into German by Otto Schumacher under the title *Vom unfreien Willen*, Gottingen, p. 54.—Tr. from the German.]

² Cp. Dermenghem, op. cit., p. 35.

decisive renunciation of any ascetic ideal. Even in religion, which elsewhere is nearly always gloomy and ascetic, the Utopians find authority for a way of thinking which by no means excludes enjoyment, but rather permits the greatest indulgence in it. For if true humanity, that is, virtue, which is the most distinctive characteristic of man, consists in alleviating the sufferings of others and in restoring joy to their lives ; should not, then, everyone be allowed to apply the same maxim to himself? To be sure, not every pleasure agrees with true happiness, but the pure and morally good desire need never be shunned ; indeed it may and should form the real goal of action. Hence the Utopians considered it simply insane to despise the charm of corporeal beauty, to impoverish the powers of the body, to turn agility into sluggishness, to weaken the constitution by fasting, to do violence to health, and otherwise to spurn the allurements of nature. When these things are not done for the sake of other and higher ends, for the welfare of society or the state, but purely for their own sake, the Utopians see in them an attitude inhuman towards oneself and most ungrateful towards nature. For nature is repelled by such renunciation, as if man were too proud to acknowledge any indebtedness to her.¹ The eudemonist and hedonist ethics of Utopia has been considered as a remarkable contrast to the fundamental Platonic views † which in all other respects this work is so closely related.² Yet this

¹ Thomas More, *Utopia*, LIB. II, ed. V. Michels and Th. Ziegler in *Lateinische Literaturdenkmäler des XV. und XVI. Jahrhunderts*, No. 11, p. 69ff. See English translation by Raphe Robynson, *Utopia with the Dialogue of Comfort* (Everyman Library), London, 1910, p. 80ff.

² Cp. H. Oncken's preface to *Utopia* (in *Klassiker der Politik*, ed. Meinecke and Oncken, Berlin 1922), VOL. I, p. 2^a.

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contrast is not so sharp as it at first appears. For, if one studies in detail the Utopian ethics, one finds that it is by no means orientated to Epicurus alone, but that it contains genuine Platonic thought. One is reminded, even in details, of the foundation and structure of the doctrine of the highest good as developed by Plato in the *Philebus*. This dialogue stands for the unconditional rejection of the pleasure-principle in so far as it lays claim to being the highest law of action. Plato opposes rational insight, φρόνησις, to pleasure—but he looks upon rational insight as the highest assurance of 'eudaimonia'. Not even corporeal desires stand necessarily as a contradiction and an obstacle to this ethical ideal; Plato marks off rather among such desires a sphere which is not only tolerated, but expressly acknowledged. Plato admits a pure pleasure, καθαρὰ ἡδονή, whose relative rights he considers as beyond dispute; this is the pleasure derived from beautiful colours and forms, also from scents and sounds. All these pleasures, like the pleasure of knowing, need never be excluded from the true and upright way of life. One should enjoy and retain them so long as they are valued according to their true worth, and subordinated to the fundamental norm of rational insight, φρόνησις.¹ There can be no doubt that these discussions in the *Philebus* served more as a model, even in the details of the Utopian ethics.² He by no means defends pleasure as such; on the contrary, he is seeking a specific norm of pleasure which will assign to each particular kind its relative worth. In this pursuit he could also consider

¹ Plato, *Philebus*, 51ff. See Jowett, op. cit., vol. iv, pp. 625ff.

² Compare especially the Latin edition of *Utopia*, op. cit., pp. 77ff. with *Philebus*, 46ff.

himself a Platonist in his ethics ; for he saw Plato again with Greek not Christian eyes. He saw Plato not as an ascetic, but as a thinker facing actual situations and as the champion of a new political and ethical reality.

The new attitude towards the world now in the offing does not, however, reach full maturity in English humanism, but in English poetry. It is this new orientation which inspires the writings of the Elizabethan age. Once more the first important impulse comes from Italy, and it is Ficino's teachings which bridge the gap between Italy and England. His commentary on Plato's *Symposium* was a source-book of English poetics throughout the whole of the sixteenth century. English literature found here the real philosophical justification of poetry, the intellectual foundation and legitimation of poetic genius and enthusiasm. English learned literature especially was constantly consulting this authority.* A scholarly poet like Chapman, the English translator of the *Iliad*, lives so completely in the matter and thought of Ficino's work that his own poems are often no more than versifications or poetical paraphrases of well-known teachings of the Florentine philosophy.¹ Thus the Platonic doctrine of Eros and the Plotinian doctrine of intelligible beauty belong to the permanent cultural heritage of the sixteenth century. They formed an integrating element in aristocratic education, in the culture of the gentleman and the courtier. One of the books which greatly influenced the education of the courtier in England was Annibale Romei's *Courtier's Academy*, which was published in English translation by John Keper in

* Fuller treatment is available in Franck J. Schoell, *Études sur l'humanisme continental en Angleterre à la fin de la Renaissance*, Paris,

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1598. A scene is here depicted in which a courtly circle assembles in philosophic discussion. A presiding queen is chosen who calls upon one of the participants to speak on the origin of beauty, to determine its true nature, and to consider the question whether beauty really exists or is but a fiction of the imagination.¹ The theme is here outlined which English literature of the time treats in innumerable variations, in the course of which it undergoes more and more modification. The thought element finally becomes a mere fashionable convention, and only the most profound and original minds of the age succeed in extricating it from this covering and grasping it in its purity and originality. It is the greatest epic poet of the age who accomplishes this task and creates a new and original type of Platonic literature. The Platonism of the Elizabethan Age found its most complete poetic expression in Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, and in his 'Hymne of Heavenly Love' and 'Hymne of Heavenly Beautie'.² The form of romantic epic which Spenser, with Ariosto as his model, chose for the *Faerie Queene* is but a thin veil through which one sees the real philosophic and poetic content of the poem. The romantic adventures of the Red Cross Knight are the symbolic expression of an inner experience, of a spiritual process going on within the hero. We have here in a poetic setting an account of the ascent of the human soul to that source of beauty which is also the source of all wisdom and of all religious

¹ Concerning this aspect of the Renaissance and the role of the Platonic doctrine of beauty in the education of courtiers in the sixteenth century, see Lewis Einstein, *The Italian Renaissance in England*, New York, 1902, pp. 81ff.

² Cp. John Smith Harrison, *Platonism in English Poetry*, New York, 1903.

knowledge. When Una finally reveals herself to the hero, it is as the highest truth, the highest beauty, and the highest form of love. It demands ceaseless striving to attain to this vision of the One. Spenser's work is permeated with the heroic spirit. Its goal cannot be achieved save through the utmost exertion of all the powers of the will, both in doing and in suffering. But will-power and heroism are not sufficient in themselves to gain the prize, were it not for the fact that Eros from above takes sides in the conflict, and that human efforts are constantly sustained and seconded by divine grace :

Ay me, how many perils doe enfold
 The righteous man, to make him daily fall ?
 Were not, that heavenly grace doth him uphold,
 And stedfast truth acquite him out of all.
 Her love is firme, her care continuall,
 So oft as he through his owne foolish pride,
 Or weaknesse is to sinfull bands made thrall :
 Else should this *Redcrosse* knight in bands have dyde,
 For whose deliverance she this prince doth thither
 guide.¹

Yet that grace which accompanies man and crowns his endeavours with final victory is itself divine love, which is the original source of all of God's creative power and hence permeates creation like one great vivifying and animating stream. This love was before all existence of the world and before all creatures, heavenly or earthly. When the divine creative power still lay hidden in divine being, when without or beside

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this substance there was no other being, love was already active :

Before this worlds great frame, in which al things
Are now containd, found any being place
Ere flitting time could wag his eyas wings
About that mightie bound which doth embrace
The rolling Spheres, and parts their houres by space,
That high eternall powre, which now doth move
In all these things, mov'd in it selfe by love.¹

It is this eternal and limitless power of love which begets both the intelligible and the sensible world, and which has created and forever sustains both the world of ideas ² and the human soul in which this world finds its reflection.³ Love is not only the beginning and source of all beauty in created things, but love is this beauty itself. Between the beauty of natural things and the divine power of love and creativity, there obtains not merely a relation of cause and effect, but one of participation, and even of identity. For what we call corporeal beauty is never a relation existing between the elements, merely as such, of which a physical object

¹ Spenser, 'An Hymne of Heavenly Love,' ll. 22-8; op. cit., p. 593.

² Faire is the heaven where happy soules have place,
In full enjoyment of felicitie,
Whence they doe still behold the glorious face
Of the divine eternall Majestie ;
More faire is that, where those *Idees* on hie,
Enraunged be, which *Plato* so admyred,
And pure *Intelligences* from God inspyred.

Spenser, 'An Hymne of Heavenly Beautie,' ll. 78-84, op. cit., p. 597.

³ Such he him made, that he resemble might
Himselfe, as mortall thing immortall could ;
Him to be Lord of every living wight,
He made by love out of his owne like mould,
In whom he might his mightie selfe behould :
For love doth love the thing belov'd to see,
That like it selfe in lovely shape may bee.

Spenser, 'An Hymne of Heavenly Love,' ll. 113-19; op. cit., p. 594.

is composed. Beauty is not a quality accruing to matter from its own nature and explicable in terms of a certain structure and arrangement or proportion and harmony of its parts. Any such ratio of components would itself be something only mediate and derivative, and hence could never adequately characterise real and original beauty.¹ This original beauty becomes visible only when we apprehend the principle of becoming through the medium of that which has become, when we conceive the forming power and purpose through the medium of that which is formed. All beauty in the parts of the All is derived from the power of the forming whole ; all beauty of material being from the form which permeates and dominates it :

For of the soule the bodie forme doth take,
For soule is forme and doth the bodie make.²

This is not only in perfect agreement with the intellectual world of Plotinus, but can be paralleled almost line for line in Plotinus's writings.³ Yet the effect is that of a genuine creation, for the teachings of Plotinus are for the first time taken up by a real poet and formed by an original poetic intuition and inspiration. Spenser's hymns have the same significance for England that Michelangelo's sonnets have for Italy. They are the

¹ How vainely then doe ydle wits invent,
That beautie is not else, but mixture made
Of colours faire, and goodly tenn'rment
Of pure complexions, that shali quickly fade
And passe away, like to a sommers shade,
Or that it is but comely composition
Of parts well measurd with meet disposition.

Spenser, 'An Hymne in Honour of Beautie,' ll. 64-70 ; op. cit., p. 590.

² Ibid., ll. 132-3 ; op. cit., p. 591.

³ Passages cited above should be compared with Plotinus, especially 'Of Beauty,' *Ennead I*, bk. vi, chs. 1-3 ; cp. Guthrie, op. cit., vol. I, pp. 40-5.

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transformation of a theory of the beautiful into an artistic act and the confirmation of this theory through the fundamental powers of artistic creation.

Another prospect lies before us when we turn from the Elizabethan epic to Elizabethan drama, when—to compare only the two high points—we turn from Spenser to Shakespeare. In his sonnets Shakespeare is under the spell of a certain poetical and philosophical tradition ; similarly his love songs show that mixture of Platonism and Petrarchism which is characteristic of the style of the time. But all these conventional limitations disappear in Shakespeare's plays. Here indeed all historical parallels vanish, so that in final analysis the question of historical influences becomes irrelevant. Yet the passion of Shakespearean drama, as well as its thought and form, breathes the spirit of the Renaissance. And it is this spirit which gives Shakespeare's work its tragic force and impetus, and that intellectual freedom which is the source of Shakespeare's humour. Shakespeare contemplates the world, in full awareness of its Creator, with Promethean intensity and with Promethean pride. But he is also aware of his own genius and of the abundance of images which issue from this source as a gift from above, as a free endowment of the divine grace. Portia's words in *The Merchant of Venice* concerning the nature and source of grace ¹ are uttered in this spirit :

The quality of mercy is not strain'd,
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven

¹ [In the assertion that Portia in her famous speech is talking of divine grace rather than human mercy, Prof. Cassirer was evidently misled by the standard German rendering of 'mercy' in this passage as 'Gnade,' meaning 'grace.' When the translator called this matter to his attention several years ago, Prof. Cassirer requested that this whole

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Upon the place beneath : it is twice bless'd ;
 It blesseth him that gives and him that takes :
 'Tis mightiest in the mightiest ; it becomes
 The throned monarch better than his crown ;
 His sceptre shows the force of temporal power,
 The attribute to awe and majesty,
 Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings ;
 But mercy is above this sceptred sway,
 It is enthroned in the hearts of kings,
 It is an attribute to God himself,
 And earthly power doth then show likest God's
 When mercy seasons justice.¹

Here is no philosophical theory, much less a theological dogma. On the contrary, in these lines an element of Shakespeare's fundamental experience, a deep personal feeling, has found form and utterance. Grace is the

passage on grace be omitted. But the sudden death of the author has meantime lent a documentary value to his remarks on Shakespeare, so that it seems wiser now to retain them. This decision was recently confirmed by Mrs Toni Cassirer's revelation that at the time of his death her husband was planning to devote his next book to Shakespeare.—Tr.]

¹ ACT IV, SC. I, ll. 182-95, in *The Comedies of Shakespeare*, ed. W. J. Craig, London, Oxford University Press, p. 645. As quoted by Prof. Cassirer, the passage reads :

Die Art der Gnade weiss von keinem Zwang,
 Sie träufelt wie des Himmels milder Regen,
 Zur Erde unter ihr ; zwiefach gesegnet :
 Sie segnet den, der gibt, und den, der nimmt ;
 Am mächtigsten im Machugen, ziert sie
 Den Fürsten auf dem Thron mehr wie die Krone.
 Der Zepter zeigt die weltliche Gewalt
 Das Attribut der Würd' und Majestät
 Worin die Furcht und Scheu der Kön'ge sitzt.
 Doch Gnad' ist über dieser Zeptermacht
 Sie thronet in dem Herzen der Monarchen,
 Sie ist ein Attribut der Gottheit selbst
 Und ird'sche Macht kommt göttlicher am nächsten,
 Wenn Gnade bei dem Recht steht.

Cassirer, *Die platonische Renaissance in England und die Schule von Cambridge*, pp. 82f.

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privilege of the higher nature, which by an inner necessity communicates itself to others and shares its abundance. It knows no constraint, and it is bound by no arbitrary limitations applied from without. Grace cannot simply be earned, nor can it be acquired by force. Grace is an original act of love, a free emanation of love, which overcomes all barriers which have grown up between individuals. In this conception of grace we are far from any kind of dogmatic narrowness and stubbornness, and far above all those distinctions on the basis of which scholastic logic differentiated between *gratia praeveniens* and *gratia subsequens*, between *gratia excitans* and *gratia adjuvans*, and between *gratia sufficiens* and *gratia efficax*, or again between *gratia operans* and *co-operans*. Portia's lines give expression to deep religious feeling scarcely paralleled elsewhere in Shakespeare. Yet this kind of religion is so broad and free that it transcends all dogmatic limitations. It unites and reconciles within itself elements of Christianity and of antiquity, the concept of free grace, *gratia gratis data*, and the Greek concept of Eros. Any being whatever, Plotinus had taught, exists only in so far as it permits other being to participate in it. Just as the sun remains within itself, and yet despite this fact fills all things round about with a radiance which is constantly emanating from the sun ; so do all existing things send forth effluences which bear witness to, and are dependent on, their power. Such a way of thinking was only the natural expression of Shakespeare's genius, which thrives on such creative abandon and such lordly extravagance, retaining and heightening its own powers even while it permits them to radiate and overflow.

The heyday of Renaissance culture in England also

signified its approaching decline. The weaknesses which were to bring about this decline had been recognised and clearly pointed out early in the sixteenth century by the noblest and most profound minds of that epoch. Colet, Erasmus, and Thomas More never tire of calling attention to the serious moral vices of the age. They urge a religious and moral reformation as the necessary supplement and the indispensable condition of the revival of the spirit of art and learning. The social reform which Thomas More advocates in his *Utopia* does not attempt to sketch a remote ideal or to portray a merely fanciful 'Nowhere'. The literary form chosen for this work is but a thin veil for its severe criticism of the political and social state of England at that time.¹ The blame for this state of things is placed on the ruling class, which has lost all sense of proportion and overstepped all bounds in its lust for power and wealth. 'Therefore'; More writes,

when I consider and way in my mind all these commen wealthes, which now a dayes any where do flourish, so god helpe me, I can perceave nothing but a certein conspiracy of riche men procuringe theire owne commodities under the name and title of the commen wealth.²

More sees a remedy for these vices only in that elimination of private property which Colet had already demanded in principle in his commentary on the *Epistle to the Romans*.³ Nor does More's criticism stop

¹ Concerning the connexion between Thomas More's work and the conditions and problems of his immediate environment, see especially H. Oncken, *Die Utopia des Thomas Morus und das Machtproblem in der Staatslehre* (Sitzungsbericht der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, Jahrgang, 1922, No. 2).

² More, *Utopia*, bk. II (Everyman edition), p. 112.

³ Cp. Schirmer, *Antike, Renaissance und Puritanismus*, p. 139.

short of the royal power. He fearlessly exposes the evils of arbitrary wars, and expressly defends the principle of the sovereignty of the people. A people chooses its king for its own, not for the king's sake. It is, therefore, the duty of a prince to consider the welfare of his subjects before that of himself, as it is the business of the shepherd rather to find food for his flock than for himself.¹ When More wrote these sentences he was well aware of their opposition to the spirit then prevailing in English politics ; and he forecast prophetically his own fate in the service of Henry VIII. He saw the seeds of perdition that English Renaissance culture was fostering, without being able to avert their force. A regenerate England was not to be produced from above by absolute royal power—nor by the power of the nobility and the high church ; it would have to be built up from below by patient and persevering toil. Herein lay the force and justification of the puritan movement. In concentrating all its efforts on a single religious and political goal, puritanism had to forego the breadth and freedom of the Renaissance spirit, but in this very limitation its unbroken energy developed. Religion is made to depend on the word of the Bible, and kept in this dependence with anxious solicitude. When Whichcote in his correspondence with Tuckney defends the thesis that for Protestantism there is no infallible religious authority, and that, instead, judgment in matters of faith must be left open to everyone (*cui libet Christiano conceditur iudicium discretionis*), his puritan adversary at once objects that this principle, though valid with respect to the Pope, could never apply to the Bible. Belief in the Bible must always

¹ *Utopia*, BK. I, op. cit., p. 39.

be a sort of collier's faith (*fides carbonaria*). It stands in need of no rational confirmation, but requires the complete subjection of reason. The same spirit and attitude soon appear in all the other phases of life. On every hand life, merely as such, is mistrusted ; its purely natural powers are restrained. Love as an ethical principle is disputed ; for any love which goes directly to man, instead of treating him as a tool in the hands of a higher being, an instrument of divine will and divine glory, would be sheer idolatry. Poetry, with some few exceptions in favour of religious poetry, is condemned ; and war upon the drama and the theatre assumes an aspect of increasing violence. The puritan finally comes to look upon free theoretical contemplation, and all knowledge not serving immediately practical ends, as a waste of time ; and there are continual warnings against the dangers of a liberal education, especially against communion with the heathen sources of antiquity. A turn of opinion has thus taken place in seventeenth-century England which is visible in every province of life, and which brings about an overthrow of all values and a reaction against the fundamental ideals of the Renaissance.

After this rather long historical retrospect we have at length come back to where we began our considerations. For it is here that the philosophical task and the intellectual mission of the Cambridge School begin. We are now in a position to indicate the precise place occupied by the thinkers of this school. What they attempt is nothing less than, as it were, to halt the wheel of time—to rally once more the humanist spirit against the spirit of puritanism. But success was denied to their endeavours. The isolated theorists of the

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Cambridge School were condemned from the outset to impotence against the energy of the puritan masses. But this lack of immediate success signifies no depreciation of their achievement considered purely in its relation to ideas. This achievement consisted in defending a certain important line of thought and preserving it for posterity. They raise again questions which in Protestant circles seemed authoritatively settled for all time. They insist on the resumption of that great dispute which had gone on throughout the centuries on the problem of freedom and necessity, of morality and religion. And here again, under changed historical conditions and in an entirely new intellectual environment, Platonism now has to fulfil the function it had exercised two centuries ago in the Italian Renaissance. Against a crystallised and dogmatically limited concept of grace, the Eros concept is once more invoked ; and the ethical principle of self-sufficiency is invoked against the concept of unlimited divine power. Such was indeed the central idea which governs the entire philosophical development of the Cambridge School, and which first gave it a definite direction. Cudworth tells us in a letter to Limborch,¹ one of the most eminent Arminian theologians of the time, that he imbibed Calvinistic dogma from his infancy, and that his youth was completely dominated by Calvinism. But his first real penetration into the philosophy of antiquity delivered him for ever from this bondage.

The strength of truth has gained the day and broken through all the barriers of prejudice. I was especially moved to see that all the ancient philosophers, not only the Peripatetics,

¹ See above, p. 79n.

but also the Platonists, in whose writings I sometimes took pleasure, have constantly brought freedom to our times.

The force of this direct study of the ancients was enhanced by the indirect influence of the English Renaissance on the Cambridge men. On this point we have a most revealing autobiographical document. In the dedication to his father of his own edition of his *Philosophical Poems*, Henry More tells us that his father sowed in him the first seeds of philosophy by acquainting him in early childhood with Spenser's *Faerie Queene* : 'a Poem as richly fraught with divine Morality as Phansy'. This intellectual heritage and apprenticeship of the Cambridge men could not but arouse in them a violent antagonism towards that Augustinian doctrine (which was deliberately revived by the Jansenists in France and by the puritans in England) that all the apparent virtues of the heathen are in truth simply '*splendida vitia*'. Whichcote accuses holders of this view of betraying a narrow-minded conception of God. The real presence of God, the ὁμοίωσις θεοῦ manifests itself not in judgments and opinions, but in the will : the good will of a heathen is more godlike than the angry zeal of a Christian.¹ True divinity lies within and proceeds from within us (*e nobis nascitur*).

For reconciliation between God and Us, is not wrought, as sometimes it is said and pretended : be in the world, between parties mutually incensed and exasperated one against another . . . so that, though an amnestie be consented-to, yet are they not friendes ; but in heart enemies. . . . For God's acts are not false, overly, imperfect ; God

¹ Cp. above pp. 32ff.

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cannot make a vaine shew ; God, being perfectly under the power of goodnesse, can not denie himself. . . . They, therefore deceeve and flatter themselves extreamly ; who thinke of reconciliation with God, by meanes of a Saviour, acting upon God in their behalfe ; and not also working in or upon them, to make them God-like.¹

With these words the spell of the dogma of predestination is broken. 'Nothing is desperate in the condition of good men ; they will not live and die in any dangerous error'.² As against a religion of fear is now taught a religion of freedom, as against a religion of self-abasement, a religion of unqualified trust—of a trust not signifying mere reliance on the help of a higher power, but embodying an inner assurance of the powers of the human spirit and of the human will.

The ethical teachings of the Cambridge School are in keeping with this picture of religion. Martineau in his *Types of Ethical Theory*, in attempting to trace the historical types of ethics, ascribes the moral doctrines of Cudworth and More to the 'dianoetic type' ; and there is no doubt that these doctrines contain strong intellectualist tendencies, and that they assign a decisive role to philosophic thinking in the determination and cultivation of the moral will. But the ethics of the Cambridge School, in spite of all its intellectual and discursive aspects, can never be diverted in the direction of mere intellectualism. For it conceives the fundamental power of the intellect itself as the pure power of love ; it sees and seeks in the intellect the '*amor dei intellectualis*'. Intellectual love occupies the apex of

¹ [Whichcote to Tuckney ; cp. *Aphorisms*, 1753, pp. 14τ15.—Tr.]

² Whichcote, *Sermons*, VOL. II, p. 20 ; cp. Tulloch, op. cit., VOL. II, pp. 99ff.

Henry More's system of virtues in his *Enchiridion Ethicum*. As all numbers derive from and are measurable by unity, so intellectual love, as a simple and unique principle, is the source and measure of all the various forms of the good and the moral.¹ Because it is moved by the primal emotion of love and thus is capable of such a free act of love, the human soul is not merely subservient to the compulsion of necessity which controls all corporeal events. Fate which determines and governs the cosmos can never completely dominate the soul. It is no accident that More is not content with a purely conceptual statement of this doctrine, but gives it also a poetic form. In a didactic philosophical poem bearing the strange title 'Antipsycho-pannychia' he undertook the poetic exposition of Plotinus's doctrine of freedom and necessity, of soul and fate, as developed in the work 'Concerning Fate'.²

Wherefore the soul cut off from lowly sense,
By harmlesse fate, farre greater liberty
Must gain : for when it hath departed hence
(As all things else) should it not backward hie
From whence it came ? but such divinity
Is in our souls that nothing lesse then God
Could send them forth (as Plato's schools descry)
Wherefore when they re' eat a free abode
They'll find, unlesse kept off by *Nemesis* just rod.³

In this ethical doctrine there was no occasion or inner necessity for deciding between intellectualism and 'voluntarism',⁴ for it derives intellect and will from a

¹ See *Enchiridion ethicum*, BK. II, especially chs. 17ff.

² See Plotinus, *Ennead III*, BK. I ; cf. Guthrie, op. cit., VOL. I, pp. 86-99.

³ More, *Antipsychopannychia*, II. xiv ; cp. *Philosophical Poems*, p. 232.

common principle. The will is the most deeply-rooted faculty of the soul ; it is that which constitutes the 'very selfnesse of the soul', and establishes its existence-for-itself (*Für-Sich-Sein*), its individuality (*Ichheit*). This function of independent willing guarantees for the soul its independent existence and excludes any appearance and any disappearance of individual souls in the 'ocean of deity'.¹ But while the will thus guarantees individuality, it is also the source of that special and highest form of self-consciousness which constitutes the privilege and character of thinking natures. Reason and will are united in Eros. In Eros lies the strongest bond between man and the divine being. Eros also preserves the differentiation between God and man, and prevents the extinction of the ego in the Godhead. Hence the will of man and the creation of the world are revelations of one and the same principle of creative love :

When nothing can to Gods own self accrew,
Who's infinitely happy ; sure the end
Of this creation simply was to shew
His flowing goodnesse, which he doth out send

¹ Henry More, *Antimonopsychia—containing a confutation of the Unity of Souls*, stanzas 35-6 ; *Philosophical Poems*, p. 294 :

Yet her hid *Centralitie*
So sprightly's quickned with near Union
With God, that now lifes wished liberty
Is so encreas'd, that infinitely sh' has fun
Herself, her deep'st desire unspeakably hath wonne.

And deep desire is the deepest act,
The most profound and centrall energie,
The very selfness of the soul, which backt
With piercing might, she breaks out, forth doth flie
From dark contracting death, and doth descry
Herself unto herself ; so thus unfold
That actuall life she straightwayse saith, is I.
Thus while she in the body was infold,
Of this low life, as of herself oft tales she told.

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Not for himself ; for nought can him amend ;
 But to his creature doth his good impart,
 This infinite *Good* through all the world doth wend
 To fill with heavenly blisse each willing heart,
 So the free Sunne doeth 'light and 'liven every part.

This is the measure of Gods providence,
 The key of knowledge, the first fair Idee,
 The eye of truth, the spring of living sense,
 Whence sprout Gods secrets, the sweet mystery
 Of lasting life, eternall charity.

But you O bitter men and soure of sprite !
 Which brand Gods name with such foul infamy
 As though poor humane race he did or slight
 Or curiously view to do them some despight. . . .

Nor of well being, nor subsistency
 Of our poor souls, when they do hence depart,
 Can any be assur'd, if liberty
 We give to such odde thoughts, that thus pervert
 The laws of God, and rashly do assert
 That will rules God, but *Good* rules not Gods will.
 What ere from right, love, equity, doth start,
 For ought we know then God may act that ill,
 Onely to show his might, and his free mind fulfill.

O belch of hell ! O horrid blasphemy !
 That Heavens unblemish'd beauty thus doth stain
 And brand Gods nature with such infamy :
 Can *Wise, Juste, Good*, do ought that's harsh or vain ?
 All what he doth is for the creatures gain,
 Not seeking ought from us for his content :
 What is a drop unto the Ocean main ?
 All he intends is our accomplishment.
 His being is self-full, self joy'd, self-excellent.¹

¹ Henry More, *Psychathanasia*, bk. III, canto iv, sts. 16-22 ; *Philosophical Poems*, pp. 178f.

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In these verses Henry More has given the fullest and most pregnant expression to that attitude towards life which prevails among all the Cambridge thinkers. It is not difficult to see that this attitude involved a direct impulse towards the revival of philosophy and theology, of morals and religion ; and towards their reinstatement on another basis than that which either Calvinistic dogma or empirical psychology and epistemology could provide.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE PHILOSOPHY OF NATURE OF THE CAMBRIDGE SCHOOL

THE total achievement of the Cambridge School consists in the foundation of a philosophy of religion and in the reformulation of ethics and metaphysics in the light of this philosophy. The thinkers of this school did not, to be sure, stop here ; they sought to carry their principles into other spheres of knowledge as well. An ever-present stimulus towards this end was that they could not hope to triumph over their adversary, seventeenth-century empirical philosophy, unless they attacked it at its strongest point and captured its most strategic position. As long as empiricism claimed to be unmolested in the sphere of natural science, there was always the danger that from this stronghold it would invade the realm of intelligible being, the province of ethics and religion. It was therefore in sheer self-defence that the Cambridge men were forced to extend their investigation even into the sphere of natural science. They had already opposed empiricism because its sensualist theory of knowledge seemed to preclude all access to religious experience and threatened to divest such experience of its real meaning.¹ But now the problem had to be carried further and investigation pushed to the very root of the question. Does empiricism in its own sphere, that is, in the sphere of experi-

¹ Cp. above pp. 60ff.

mental science, satisfy the exacting requirements of philosophical knowledge? Does it rule legitimately here? Or has it not merely usurped that control over natural science to which it lays claim? By its decision in favour of the latter alternative the Cambridge School takes upon itself a new task. It can no longer be content simply to reject the philosophy of nature of empiricism; it must now confront empiricism with a new and positive structure. Cudworth and More both undertook this task; but neither the one nor the other was equal to its solution. The attempt to place science on a sound philosophical basis in the seventeenth century could be made with prospects of success only when one had at one's disposal the new methodological instruments which science had evolved since Gilbert and Harvey, Galileo and Kepler, and Descartes and Robert Boyle. The rigorous methodology of the scientific experiment and the intellectual instrument of mathematical analysis had to be utilised in such an enterprise, and they had to be thoroughly mastered. But the Cambridge philosophers lacked both the method and the mathematics of science. Yet they were not without scientific interests¹ and knowledge. Henry More, especially, was constantly seeking to extend his acquaintance with the sciences. But all this knowledge remained to the last mere raw material, defective in intellectual mastery and penetration. Observation might be added to observation and facts heaped on facts *ad infinitum*, yet what the philosophers of the Cambridge School lacked was the plain concept of the scientific 'fact' itself. There is a certain element of intellectual form in this concept which the Cambridge men never understood

¹ Cp. above p. 60.

or recognised as such. Not controlling this element, they found themselves, as it were, adrift without rudder or compass on the swift stream of empirical knowledge. They were constantly gathering scientific knowledge, but they did not differentiate within it. They had no norm for the critical examination and evaluation of individual observations. The upshot of such a procedure could only be an aggregate or a conglomerate, lacking any sort of inner unity or strictly logical character. The results of direct sense-perception and of experiments performed according to scientific method, their own observations and those of others obtained merely from hearsay, were all put together in a chequered miscellany. In Henry More this lack of critical evaluation goes so far that he finally accepts without question any sort of apparent fact, quite irrespective of the form of its derivation. Hence one finds in his writings, beside his own observations or the exact observations he has obtained from others, reports and tales of miracles in which he credulously confides. This gives rise again in a scientifically-minded age to an almost unbridled belief in miracles ; again speculation and fancy are given a free rein with facts and allowed to suit them to their own ends. Magic and occultism, stories of ghosts and apparitions, are included in a doctrine of nature and displayed as welcome evidences of the spirituality of nature. Spiritualism and spiritism are fused into a unity. Hence we have the strange spectacle that the Cambridge Platonists, who in the sphere of religious doctrine stood for the inalienable prerogative of reason, renounce and betray reason just at the point where they undertake an explanation of nature. Though they were rational in respect to

religion, they are mystic and cabbalistic in respect to nature.¹ Herein lies the real systematic weakness of this school and the historical explanation of its ineffectiveness in its own time. If one compares the philosophy of religion of the Cambridge School with its philosophy of nature, one sees, to be sure, that the reason for this lack of immediate influence was in both cases the exact opposite. Considered with respect to their position in seventeenth-century thought, the Cambridge philosophers stand out as typically 'un-modern' thinkers. But, whereas in the one case they are ahead of their age, in the other they remain behind it. In their position towards the conflict between faith and knowledge, and between reason and dogma, the essential feature of the eighteenth century, of the philosophy of the Enlightenment, becomes manifest. There are passages in Whichcote's aphorisms and sermons which point directly to Lessing's conception of religion and to his definition of Christianity.² In their doctrine of nature, however, Cudworth and More proceed in the opposite direction. They attempt to return to that form of the philosophy of nature which mathematical physics had dethroned and vanquished. Henry More hailed Descartes's philosophy of nature on first acquaintance most enthusiastically, admiring it as an incomparable achievement. But the farther he

¹ Cp. Henry More's long series of cabbalistic writings, especially his *Conjectura cabbalistica*, London, 1679. See also More's *Antidotus adversus atheismum*, LIB. III, in *Opera Latina*, vol. II, pp. 93ff.

² Compare, for instance, Whichcote, *Sermons*, vol. III, pp. 45ff. (cited from Tulloch, op. cit., vol. II, p. 105): 'The true Gospel spirit is transcendently and eminently remarkable every way for those things that are lovely in the eyes of men—for ingenuity, modesty, humility, gravity, patience, meekness, charity, kindness, etc.; and so far as any one is Christian in spirit and power, so far he is refined and reformed by these graces.'

followed Descartes the greater became his aversion to his teachings until at length he publicly repudiated them. This meant not only a renunciation of the content of the Cartesian doctrine, but also of its methodological spirit. It meant that More had broken with the strongest and most fruitful scientific force of the seventeenth century, exact mathematics. The mania for exact demonstration, the '*morbus mathematicus*', More sees as a fundamental flaw in the Cartesian philosophy. But the only path leading beyond Descartes did not turn away from mathematics ; it passed directly through its midst. This was the path which Leibniz followed, and in so doing he placed spiritualism on a firmer basis than the Cambridge men were able to do. Leibniz's spiritualism could never become the adversary of mathematics, for it is founded upon this science as its strongest support. It does not assert itself in opposition to, but on the strength of, mathematics ; and on the basis of this relationship it could embrace both mechanism and the modern form of mathematical physics, and impregnate them with its own spirit. Since the Cambridge men were unequal to this task, they had to withdraw more and more from the new science. But the spiritualism of the Cambridge thinkers was thus left either in the void or, where it sought concrete application and realisation, it had to people this void with the offspring of the unfettered imagination, with metaphysical phantasms.

The philosophy of nature of the Cambridge School no longer has for us any positive systematic significance, but this circumstance robs it of none of its historical interest. For the reaction of these thinkers enables us to visualise and clarify the underlying trend and

character of the intellectual forces active in the foundation and structure of modern science. The possibility of an exact science of nature existed for the modern mind from the time when it became conscious of the mental processes by which it could reduce to hard and fast laws, not only the realm of being, but also the realm of becoming and change. This achievement was beyond the horizon of ancient thought. The philosophers of antiquity took as their starting-point the concept, and not the law ; and they looked upon becoming as the antithesis of that strict identity required by the concept. Becoming was confined to the world of phenomena, of appearances in flux, whereas the sphere of the intelligible, of *noumena*, was closed to becoming. As opinion (δόξα) is to knowledge (ἐπιστήμη), so is becoming to being. The modern era, however, has discovered the truth of becoming, that is, the knowledge of becoming and about becoming. This step is made possible by mathematics, which offers a model in the form of infinitesimal analysis for the logical control of change ; and mathematics makes it possible to grasp with rigorous precision the relations and conditions existing between changing magnitudes. Thus a new path is also opened up for the knowledge of physical becoming. Galileo, as a convinced Platonist, can venture the transference of motion itself to the realm of ideas.¹ The Cambridge School could neither accomplish this step nor appraise its real significance. One of the most eminent mathematicians of the time and a co-founder of modern analysis, Isaac Barrow, seems to have been on intimate terms with the Cam-

¹ For further details, see Cassirer, *Individuum und Kosmos*, p. 182.

'bridge men ¹ ; but there is no evidence that he exercised any actual influence on the general trend of their thought. Hence, although they constantly debate the question of the relation of the ideal to the real, of mind to reality ; yet they never put this question in its purely epistemological, but only in its metaphysical sense. Their problem is not whether and in what manner purely ideal knowledge, as exemplified by mathematics, conditions and makes possible knowledge of the real and of nature ; but whether the origin of motion is to be sought in matter or in an immaterial, spiritual power. The answer to this question stands ready for them in advance. They need only set out upon the way taught them by their philosophical preceptor, and traverse it once again.

Plotinus's metaphysics and doctrine of nature form a system of strict emanation. They represent no development in the sense that higher being evolves from lower in the process of time. For how could the perfect arise from the imperfect ? How could being come into existence which before was non-existent ? The highest being, the being of the highest principle, is complete actuality. In it pure reality rules supreme with no intermixture of possibility. Possibility would mean that something in the highest being does not yet exist, or is still undeveloped. But any such assumption contradicts the absolute completion which we attribute to the most real. One can understand how this completion as a final stage may diminish, how it may gradually decline according to a given scale, and finally sink to the limits of not-being. But the reverse

¹ Concerning Barrow's relations with the Cambridge School, see Georg von Hertling, *John Locke und die Schule von Cambridge*, pp. 154f.

process, the derivation of the higher from the lower, is incomprehensible. For no being can give what it does not have ; no merely quantitative accumulation of elements, however great, can contribute to the whole another quality, another nature or value than that possessed by the individual element. The atomistic view is thus from the first eliminated from Plotinus's system as a principle for the explanation of nature. It is as hard to explain the world as a collection of atoms, as it is to understand the sense of a poem, say the *Iliad*, as a collection of letters. In both cases the form is the absolute *prius*, πρότερον τῇ φύσει, in respect to matter ; the whole is prior to the parts and cannot therefore be derived from them. Plotinus then applies this general principle to the problem of the origin of life and of the soul. Here likewise form, since it is composed of something entirely different from matter, cannot be derived from matter. It is impossible that a chance concurrence of bodies should bring about life, and that the non-mental should beget mind.¹ For mind is rather the first lawgiver or, more correctly speaking, the law of being itself.

This Intellectual Principle, if the term is to convey the truth, must be understood to be not a principle merely potential and not one maturing from unintelligence to intelligence—that would simply send us seeking, once more, a necessary prior—but a principle which is intelligence in actuality and eternity. Now a principle whose wisdom is not borrowed must derive from itself any intellection it may make ; and

¹ 'The most irrational theory of all is that an aggregation of molecules should produce life, that elements without intelligence should beget intelligence.' Plotinus, 'Of the Immortality of the Soul,' *Ennead IV*, bk. vii, ch. 2 ; cp. Guthrie, op. cit., vol. I, pp. 57f.

! anything it may possess within itself it can hold only from itself.¹

Thus is expressed the guiding principle which governs the whole philosophy of nature of the Cambridge School. In this phase of their thought too the Cambridge men oppose both mechanism and empiricism as guilty of the same basic error, that of *hysteron proteron*. Both reverse the true order of becoming : the one in deriving the spiritual from the corporeal, the other in deriving the intellect from sense-perception. The truth is, however, that mind, if comprehensible at all, can only be known as something original, not as something emergent—only as an absolute first, not as a second. The principle of emanation is thus resolutely affirmed rather than the modern principle of evolution or of epigenesis :

. . . no Effect can possibly transcend the Power of its Cause. Wherefore it is certain that in the Universe, things did not thus *ascend* and mount, or Climb up from *Lower Perfection* to Higher, but on the contrary, *Descend* and *Slide* down from *Higher* to *Lower*, so that the first Original of all things, was not the most *Imperfect*, but the most *Perfect Being*. But . . . it is certain . . . that *Life* and *Sense* could never possibly spring, out of *Dead and Senseless Matter*. . . .

Much less could *Understanding* and *Reason* in men, ever have emerged out of *Stupid Matter*, devoid of all manner of *Life* . . . for according to the Doctrine of the Pagan *Theists*, Mind was *προγενέστατος καὶ κύριος κατὰ φύσιν*, the Oldest of all things, Senior to the World and Elements ; and by Nature hath Princely and Lordly Dominion over all. But according to those *Atheists*, who make *Matter* or *Body* de-

¹ Cp. Plotinus, 'Of Intelligence, Ideas and Essence,' *Ennead V*, bk. ix, chs. 3-5 ; cp. Guthrie, op. cit., vol. i, pp. 104-9.

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void of all *Life* and *Understanding*, to be the first *Principle*, *Mind* must be ὑστερογενής, a *Post-Nate* thing, Younger than the world ; a Weak, Umbratil, and Evanid Image, and next to Nothing.¹

A *Perfect Understanding Being*, is the *Beginning* and *Head* of the *Scale* of Entity ; from whence things *Gradually* Descend downward ; lower and lower, till they end in *Senseless Matter* . . . *Mind is the Oldest of all things*, Senior to the Elements, and the whole Corporeal World ; and like wise . . . by *Nature Lord over all*, or hath a *Natural Imperium* and *Dominion* over all ; it being the most *Hege-monical thing*.²

Two different implications are contained in the first of these quotations. One thing is clear, that consciousness cannot be derived from the unconscious, that the human self is something individual and original, which is not to be measured by merely objective standards, but which is rather something absolutely irreducible to, and incommensurable with, such standards. The reflective knowledge we have of our own ego can never be inferred from the certainty of the objects of sense, for any knowledge of a sense-object, any judgment passed on a sense-datum, necessarily presupposes this knowledge. We can know nothing of sense-contents or of objects 'except we first know what it is to know'.³ It follows, then, that the pure principle of individuality (*Ichheit*) is not explicable from the existence of objects alone ; and yet, the possibility of a deduction of this principle cannot be rejected. For in the sphere of intelligible being likewise the whole is prior to its parts

¹ Cudworth, *True intellectual System*, bk. 1, ch. 4, folio, pp. 728f.

² Id., bk. 1, ch. 5, folio, pp. 858f.

³ John Smith, 'Of the Immortality of the Soul,' ch. 3, *Select Discourses*, 1660, p. 77.

and the totality of being takes precedence over individual being. Hence we are just as certain of a more comprehensive power, within which the self has its place, as we are of our own individual ego. The being and agency of the individual soul can be understood only under the assumption of the being and agency of the World-Soul. The proof of the existence of the World-Soul, again, follows very closely the reasoning of Plotinus. If all being endowed with soul existed only in that form in which it appears in sentient and thinking individuals, it would then follow that the most despicable animal which can see and enjoy the sun would possess a higher degree of being and perfection than all the heavenly bodies put together. Yet the sun, on the other hand, as the source of life and warmth has so great an influence on the well-being of the entire universe, including all plants and animals, that it would seem to be something far more noble and necessary in the world than any particular living creature.¹ Hence the soul, taken in its widest and most general sense, is not so much the principle of self-consciousness as the principle of life and of living forms. It is the creating and generating force in all organic processes ; it weaves the living robe of the Godhead. In his philosophical poems Henry More tried to give a poetic representation of this panpsychism (*All-Leben der Seele*). The soul sits at the loom and causes an unceasing flux of images to issue from itself. It is for ever creating forms, and it is concealed from us behind the profusion of its forms. We never see the soul itself, but only its cloak and drapery. All plant and animal, all vegetative and

¹ Cudworth, *True intellectual Systeme*, folio, p. 858 ; cp., for instance, Plotinus, *Ennead V*, sect. 1 and *passim*.

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sensitive being is the creation of the unceasing activity of this vital force ; all growth and decay are included in this creation. What we call nature (φύσις) is but the appearance of the original creativity, the fabric and veil which it has woven about itself.¹ The essence of the soul lies in this its vitality, which cannot be derived from materiality or corporeality, but forms on the contrary the foundation and source of the material world.² Once more the original attitude towards nature of the Renaissance, its vitalism and dynamism, now are revived in full force in opposition to the materialism and mechanism of Hobbes's philosophy of nature. More depicts the elemental power of the soul just as Spenser at the time of the English Renaissance had seen and poetically embodied this power in his 'Hymne in Honour of Beautie'.³ For Cudworth, too, all events in the universe depend not on forces operating from without, but on a forming principle from within, an original 'Plastick Nature'. This nature operates unconsciously, and hence is not to be equated to God's being, to the highest intelligence which controls and guides the cosmos. But it is the medium employed by God Himself. Instead of intervening in all events directly, He has endowed finite being with powers of its own by which it forms itself. The reason operating here is not original, but copied ; it is not archetypal,

¹ See Henry More, *Psychathanasia*, especially bk. i, canto ii, sts. 8ff. ; and *Psychozoia*, canto i, sts. 40ff. (*Philosophical Poems*, pp. 11ff. and 82ff.)

² Onely that vitality,
That doth extend this great Universall,
And move th'inert Materiality
Of great and little worlds, that keep in memory.

Psychathanasia, bk. ii, canto i, st. 7, p. 108.

³ Cp. especially 'An Hymne in Honour of Beautie,' sts. 5ff. and *passim*.

but ectypal. It is that reason which governs the motion of the heavenly bodies as well as the growth of plants and the instincts and appetites of animals. All these things appear simply to spring from an obscure impulsion, and so to belong rather to the realm of matter than to that of mind. But here in the thick of the material world the rule of form is seen as the rule of design, for even the unconscious processes of nature are teleologically ordered and determined. Teleological activity is most clearly and completely seen in the will and intention of man, but it is by no means confined to this its highest externalisation. Ethical reason is preceded by plastic reason as that reason which is, as it were, merged in and confined to matter.¹

It was inevitable that any such general view of nature should come into violent conflict with the Cartesian

¹ "Though it be true that the Works of Nature are dispensed by a *Divine Law and Command*, yet this is not to be understood in a vulgar sense, as if they were all effected by the mere Force of a Verbal Law or Outward Command, because inanimate things are not commandable nor governable by such a Law; and therefore besides the Divine Will and Pleasure, there must be some other Immediate Agent and Executioner provided for the producing of every Effect. . . . Wherefore the Divine Law and Command, by which the things of Nature are administered, must be conceived to be the Real Appointment of some Energetick, Effectual and Operative Cause for the Production of every Effect. . . . Wherefore since neither all things are produced fortuitously or by the unguided Mechanism of Matter, nor God himself may reasonably be thought to do all things Immediately and Miraculously, it may well be concluded, that there is a *Plastick Nature* under him, which as an Inferior and Subordinate Instrument doth drudgingly execute that Part of his Providence which consists in the Regular and Orderly Motion of Matter: yet so as that there is also besides; is a Higher Providence to be acknowledged, which presiding over it doth often supply the Defects of it, and sometimes overrule it; forasmuch as this *Plastick Nature* cannot act, *Electively* nor with *Discretion*. . . . *Nature* is not the *Divine Art Archetypal*, but only *Ectypal*, it is a living Stamp or Signature of the Divine Wisdom, which though it act exactly according to its Archetype, yet it doth not at all Comprehend nor Understand the Reason of what it self doth." Cudworth, *True intellectual System*, bk. 1, ch. 3, sect. xxxvii, §§ 2, 5 and 11, folio, pp. 147ff.

doctrine. Henry More's behaviour towards Descartes, his turning from extravagant praise to a positive denial and rejection of Descartes' teachings, have often been censured ; but if one gives due consideration to More's presuppositions, it is the initial praise that is paradoxical and remarkable rather than the vehement polemic of a later date. More was certain to reject the Cartesian philosophy of nature as soon as he had discovered its consequences. Descartes in his philosophy of nature is seeking complete mathematical knowledge and control of nature. He does not wish, like Cudworth and More, to 'contemplate the power and seed of all activity'.¹ He would analyse phenomena in order to subject them to his newly-discovered method, the method of mathematical analysis. In so far as this aim was to be achieved, all natural phenomena would have to be reduced to exact laws, and all special laws would in turn have to be subordinated to one supreme purely quantitative principle. Descartes discovered the principle which assured the application of mathematics to nature in his law of the conservation of the quantity of motion. All the special laws of nature follow from this principle. The fundamental assumption of the constancy of the product of mass-times-velocity permits the unambiguous deduction of the laws of impact, and in these laws are included all the effects which one

¹ In the *Divine Dialogues*, one of his earliest works, Henry More defends, against Descartes, the thesis 'that the primordials of the world are not mechanical, but *spermatical or vital*.' Cp. Tulloch, op. cit., vol. II, pp. 317ff. [For the original German of the quotation in text above, see p. 192, note 1. Here as elsewhere Prof. Cassirer uses the language of Goethe in expressing certain aspects of the philosophy of nature of the Cambridge School and Shaftesbury. For the author looked upon Goethe as an inheritor through Shaftesbury of some of the basic concepts of the nature philosophy of the Cambridge men. Cp., for instance, pp. 199f. below.—Tr.]

body can exercise upon another. The homogeneity and coherence of the corporeal world would cease at once, if there were other forces, not reducible to quantity which were capable of affecting this world and of producing any motion in it. All access of such forces to the material world must be absolutely prohibited, if nature is to be conceived as a mathematical system and subjected to a simple law of magnitudes. The outcome of Descartes's ideal of method—that is, his ideal of logical and mathematical deduction—is, therefore, to place the corporeal world on an independent footing. Its essence is pure extension and its whole operation must be describable according to the forms and relations of extension, in purely geometrical language. '*Ce qui passe la géométrie nous surpasse*' (what is beyond geometry is beyond us)—Pascal condensed the whole Cartesian philosophy of nature into these words. The radical separation of soul and body, of thinking and extended substance, is but a corollary and necessary consequence of this central view. The possibility of the geometrical interpretation of natural phenomena would cease, if but a single phenomenon could be conceived otherwise than according to purely quantitative laws, and referred to a mental, non-spatial agent. It was thus the very unity of Descartes' method which required the duality of substances, and compelled him to assign mental and corporeal being to two different worlds. Once he has set out in this direction, he proceeds with unerring consistency to the very end. Pure thought (*cogitatio*) is essential to mental substance, and extension is essential to corporeal substance. Hence there are but two alternatives; where we do not observe the attribute of pure thought in any existing thing, we must assign

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it to the corporeal world and reserve it for this world alone. All those things, too, which we are accustomed to call the life of nature, are subject to this verdict. According to Descartes any life, not of the form of thought, and not of the kind of reflective knowledge such as prevails in man, is mere illusion. Since animals are wanting in this kind of self-knowledge, they are also deprived of sensation ; they are mere automata. A complete bifurcation of nature takes place. The logical mathematical spirit has retired into itself ; it has excluded all other forms, and abandoned them to mere mechanism.

At this point the Cambridge Platonists put up a passionate resistance, for here they saw the rupture of that spiritual bond which holds their world together. If the soul is prevented from affecting the corporeal world, then it has lost both substance and sense. For the sense of the soul becomes manifest in its agency, in its plastic activity. The soul is only in so far as it moves body, and this action of the soul is not simply occasional and contingent, but absolutely essential. The soul is not merely *a* principle, it is *the* principle, of motion : it is the real ἀρχὴ τῆς κινήσεως. The soul is not that which is moved from without, but the self-moving ; and all intermediate impulse is comprehensible only when referred to an original impulse of this sort, to a being which has within itself the capacity and impetus to produce motion. If this immediate impetus were to cease, all secondary effects would disappear ; if the soul were to stand still, the world would have to stop with it.¹ The Cambridge men believed that the

¹ Cp. Plotinus, 'About the Movement of the Heavens,' *Ennead II*, bk. II, ch. I ; cp. Guthrie, vol. I, pp. 227-30.

Cartesian theory condemned nature to such a standstill, for all merely geometrical extension is dead extension. Thus by starting from a premise opposite to that of Descartes, and proceeding with no less formal consistency, the Cambridge philosophers came to an opposite conclusion. Descartes concludes that soul cannot affect body because the two are of entirely different natures. Cudworth and More conclude that, strictly speaking, no body can affect any other precisely because they are both of the same nature, because they are passive, not active. This opposition is at once accountable, if one considers that in these two cases a quite different standard of measurement is employed. The norm of Descartes lies in logic and epistemology, while the norm of the Cambridge men lies in metaphysics and theology. Descartes would take the science of nature as a special case coming under the general ideal of a *mathesis universalis*, and determinable by and deducible from that ideal. Cudworth and More would refer the being of nature back to the being of God, and use the former as proof of the latter. They are not interested in finding the empirical laws of motion and expressing them in mathematical form; they want to understand the possibility of creation and fathom its depths. But how would this be possible, if the fundamental principle of Descartes's doctrine of substance were the necessary presupposition for the possibility of interaction? Descartes had established this axiom because his problem was to obtain a strictly quantitative measure of interaction, and because, if the one was to be measured by the other, cause and effect had to be conceived as strictly homogeneous. But, though mathematics demands this homogeneity, metaphysics

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calls for heterogeneity. Activity in the sense of genuine creation must be of another kind than its product, because it is by nature superior to the latter. The process of metaphysical activity, according to the system of Plotinus, which Cudworth and More follow, proceeds from above to below. It does not take place within a uniform medium like Cartesian extension, but within a descending series. Consequently, the difference in degree and kind between agent and patient does not contradict the real nature of causality ; on the contrary, it is the *conditio sine qua non* of true causality. Mechanism negates this distinction ; but in doing so it has levelled all qualitative differences within the realm of being and deprived itself of any means of ascending from the lower to the higher, from nature to its first moving cause. It is this objection which Cudworth persistently raises against any attempt at a purely mechanical interpretation of nature : to accept mechanism is to proclaim atheism.

Henry More goes one step beyond this reasoning, however, in his *Enchiridion metaphysicum* ; he seeks to replace the purely negative argument by a new and positive one. Mechanism reduces nature to geometry, and in geometry he sees the science of pure space. Hence the reality of nature is derived from something purely abstract and ideal. But if we examine more closely this abstraction itself, and try to ascertain its nature and kind, we arrive at a remarkable and surprising conclusion. For what is that extension in which, according to Descartes, the essence of matter and the substance of the corporeal world are supposed to consist ? Is it really something of the same kind as corporeal being ? Or is it not rather something funda-

mentally different—indeed, in all its properties, diametrically opposite? What specifications do we then encounter in pure extension? Do we conceive it as corporeal being? Or is it not rather presented to us as a purely intelligible substance? In response to these queries More's spiritualism launches its decisive attack upon Descartes's 'mathematicism' and 'logicism'. And here is reached the most original—and indeed also the most paradoxical—conclusion of the nature philosophy of the Cambridge School. There is a peculiar historical irony in the fact that just this argument, with which the Cambridge men believed they could check the progress of exact physical science, was the very one destined to survive and materially to further the development of the basic theory of physical science. For it was Henry More's spiritualistic doctrine of space which decisively influenced Newton's doctrine of space and paved the way for his doctrine of absolute space.¹ Henry More's reasoning against the Cartesian theory of space is of an indirect kind; it is an *argumentum ad hominem*. Supposing that Descartes had succeeded in deducing all natural phenomena from the phenomena of motion, and all motion from pure space, would he then really have gained his end, would he have achieved the triumph of a strictly mechanical account of nature? Or would not this triumph lead, ultimately, to an absurdity? One may determine space in detail as one will, yet the fact remains that any attempt simply to equate space with matter entangles us in insoluble logical contradictions. Coincidence here is so slight that the farther one goes into the matter the nearer one

¹ For further proof of the relationship between Newton's and Henry More's doctrine of space, see Cassirer, *Erkenntnisproblem*, vol. II, pp. 442ff.

comes to a completely antithetical relation between these two concepts. Matter is necessarily composed of a multiplicity of parts, and is conceived as an aggregate of these parts. But for space such a division is only apparent ; for however reduced in size we may think of space, yet in every portion however small, there is still contained not only a part of space, but always space as a whole. Its essence, composition, and structure are quite independent of its size and extent ; they remain the same in its largest as in its smallest portion. Space is thus homogeneous and single. Multiplicity of parts does not precede space, but is itself possible only in this homogeneous and single form. The same is true of all other properties of space. All matter exists in space ; it occupies a limited section of space and is itself accordingly finite and limited. The finitude of space on the other hand is inconceivable, since space must necessarily be represented as free of all limitation. And just as unity and boundlessness belong to space so does indestructibility ; for, if we were to think of the whole material world as annihilated, yet space would remain what it was before. The metaphysical consideration of space, then, tells us that it is one and simple, eternal and complete, that it is independent and self-existent, infinite and indestructible, uncreated and omnipresent. But are all these the determinations which we ascribe to any sensible, material thing, indeed which we can so much as conceive to be possible for such a thing ? Or are they not rather the determinations of the God-head itself ? If, therefore, we look for an analogy of space in its pure essence, we can never find anything analogous or related in the world of sense, but only in the intelligible world. Hence we must liken space not

so much to any corporeal nature as to spiritual nature.¹ On the force of this reasoning More believes he has wrested from the adversary his most formidable weapon. The fact that nature is to be found in space and is extended in space, far from divorcing nature from intelligible being, and thus from divine being becomes a new, and perhaps the strongest bond between nature and God. Henceforth this fact can no longer serve as proof that the corporeal world is self-sufficient, that it is to be accounted for exclusively in its own terms, that is, on purely mechanical principles. On the contrary, it is space which bridges the gap between material and divine being, since both participate equally in space. The proposition that all 'being is somewhere, is an absolutely general axiom, holding for every order of being. Descartes was wrong when he thought he could make thinking substances an exception to this axiom ; and again when he feared that these substances would suffer from a blemish if one were to attribute to them spatial existence and agency. This fear is due merely to the fact that he did not draw a sufficiently sharp distinction between that picture of space which is presented to the imagination through sense and the pure substance of space which we can grasp only in thought. Consequently, instead of giving spirit its legitimate place in and above the world, he had to relegate it to a mere nowhere—he had to become a 'nullubist'.² Space is of course in no sense the full reality of God ; but a reflection and, as it were, a shadow and symbol of that reality : *'confusior quaedam et*

¹ For further study, see Henry More, *Enchiridium metaphysicum sive de rebus incorporeis*, PART I, ch. viii ; *Antidotus adversus Atheismus*, appendix, ch. 7. Cp. also Cassirer, *Erkenntnisproblem*, VOL. II, pp. 444f.

² More, *Enchiridium metaphysicum*, ch. xxvii.

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generalior repraesentatio essentiae sive essentialis praesentiae divinae.¹ For it is only through being in space that God can embrace and affect the being of all things. On the basis of this reasoning More can deliberately boast that he has brought God back into the world by the same gate through which Descartes took Him out. The nature and essence of space are in no sense foreign to the divine substance. On the contrary, space exemplifies a special side or phase of God's nature ; it is the instrument of the divine omnipresence. Since space on the other hand is, as it were, the birthplace of the world, since it is the receptacle, the *πρῶτον δεκτικόν* of matter, the final reconciliation between God and the world is now established. If More thought he could obtain a solution of the metaphysical antinomies of the concept of creation in this way, he was subject to a remarkable delusion. For in truth he strengthened these antinomies by his doctrine and set them off in a new light. At a later date, in his correspondence with Clarke, Leibniz used More's theory to show all the contradictions in which the positing of space as an absolutely real infinite substance must become involved.

Thus by Leibniz's example one can show both the relative accomplishment of the philosophical labours of the Cambridge School towards a new foundation for the philosophy of nature and the reasons why these labours were destined to failure. Leibniz himself knew

¹ Ibid. ; *Opera*, vol. I. pp. 171ff. It is unnecessary here to go into the details of More's theory of spirits, especially his unique doctrine of the '*spissitudo essentialis*,' of the capacity of spirits to occupy now a smaller, now a greater amount of space. For within the whole framework of More's philosophy this doctrine counts as little more than a curiosity. For details, see Robert Zimmermann. *Henry More und die vierte Dimension des Raumes* (*Sitzungsbericht der Wiener Akademie, Philos. histor. Klasse*, vol. 98), pp. 403ff. .

that there were many points of contact between the philosophical position of the Cambridge men and his own foundation of metaphysics, and he cited Cudworth's *True Intellectual System* in enthusiastic recognition.¹ If, nevertheless, he does not follow the doctrine of 'plastic natures', it is not so much because he takes exception to its content as to its method. Leibniz also stresses the fact that the philosophy of Descartes fails to do justice to the phenomenon of organic life, and that instead of explaining this phenomenon Descartes pushes it aside and nullifies it. But when Leibniz, on the other hand, attempts to clarify the problem of life in its own kind, and to lay a foundation of life to which the mechanical view of nature cannot penetrate, he never seeks to violate the rights of the mathematico-physical explanation of nature. Within its own sphere this explanation remains wholly autonomous. It is unnecessary to assume special vital powers in order to explain organic processes, for these processes are also subject to purely quantitative laws, especially to the law of the conservation of vital energy which is the highest principle of any theory of nature. In a letter widely known because of its importance in the development of his doctrine, Leibniz has described the manner in which he arrived at this central view. 'After I had freed myself of the usual scholastic philosophy', he writes to Remond,

I fell upon the writings of the moderns, and I can still remember going for a walk one day at the age of fifteen in a little wood near Leipzig called Rosental, and on this walk I reflected whether I should retain substantial forms.

¹ See Leibniz, '*Considération sur les Principes de Vie et sur les Natures Plastiques*' ; *Philosophische Schriften*, ed. Gerhardt, VOL. VI., p 544.

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Mechanism finally triumphed and induced me to dedicate myself to mathematics, into whose depths, to be sure, I did not penetrate until later under Huyghens, whose acquaintance I made in Paris. But when I sought the ultimate grounds of mechanism and of the laws of motion themselves, I saw to my surprise that it was not possible to find them in mathematics, and that I should have to return to metaphysics.¹

The mechanistic position, then, brings Leibniz to the study of mathematics—but mathematics brings him back to philosophy again. For the new analysis of infinity which he discovers appears to him ‘as if derived from the innermost source of philosophy’ (*ex intimo philosophiae fonte derivata*). Now arises the task of constructing a philosophy of life, which, although it cannot be based entirely on the mathematical doctrine of principles, yet does not contradict this doctrine on any point. This is the task which leads to the conception of the Leibnizian monadology. In the system of monads the rigorous requirements of a mathematical account of nature can be perfectly satisfied ; for the corporeal world itself, to which this account applies, no longer means absolute substantial being, but has become appearance (*phaenomenon bene fundatum*). Within this phenomenon there is no exception to mathematical and mechanical laws. Nor is space to be taken as a substance, as a self-existent thing ; it must be looked upon as something purely ideal, that is, as a relation existing between phenomena, a certain kind of order among them which has its own special form and its own fixed and exact rules. Leibniz sees the only possible

¹ Leibniz to Remond, 10 January, 1714 ; cp. *Philosophische Schriften*, VOL. III, p. 606.

solution of the antinomies of the concepts of space and time and of the concept of the universe in such a distinction between the concepts of order and of being, between the sphere of the ideal and the real. And he expressly contrasts this solution with the teachings of the Cambridge School. 'I have found', he writes in the same letter to Remond,

that most philosophical sects are in the main right in their positive assertions, but not in their denials. The formalists, like the Platonists and the Aristotelians, are right in seeking the source of things in formal or final causes, but they are wrong when they neglect the efficient and material causes and, like Henry More and some of the other Platonists, conclude that there are phenomena which cannot be accounted for on mechanical principles. The materialists and all those who devote themselves exclusively to the mechanistic philosophy, are wrong, however, in rejecting all metaphysical considerations and admitting only such explanations as are valid in the sphere of sense perception.

Leibniz thus sets up the ideal of a new metaphysics whose method is to unite and reconcile the requirements resulting from knowledge of intelligible being with those raised by knowledge of the corporeal world. All corporeal phenomena can be explained strictly according to the principles of the corpuscular philosophy and without the intervention of any concept of the spiritual. But the last analysis of these principles themselves shows of course that they cannot be accounted for solely in terms of geometric extension, that the ultimate source of the concept of force must be sought rather in metaphysics than in mathematics alone.¹ Leibniz's meta-

¹ Cp., for instance, Leibniz, *Discours de Métaphysique*, sect. 10 and *passim*.

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physics, in other words, seeks to define, but not to confine, mathematics and mathematical physics ; it leaves them complete freedom and unhampered application within their own sphere, in order, finally, to establish this sphere as a whole on a firmer metaphysical basis.

That Leibniz's thought developed along these lines, in conscious opposition to the Cambridge philosophy, was not because he entertained another view of Platonism than the Cambridge thinkers. The latter approach the Platonic world from the angle of metaphysics and theology, and they treat it throughout from this viewpoint. Leibniz, on the other hand, sets out as logician and mathematician, and from this standpoint he sees the Platonic doctrine of ideas in a new light. He was the first European thinker to emancipate himself inwardly from that conception of Platonism devised by the Florentine Academy, and to see Plato again with his own eyes. He protested especially against that syncretism which confused Plato's original thought with later admixtures and made a medley of Platonic and neo-Platonic elements.

We cannot judge Plato's teachings by Plotinus or Marsilio Ficino, for they have perverted his fundamental doctrine in their scurrings after the miraculous and the mystical. One cannot but be astonished at human short-sightedness when one observes how the later Platonists leave in the dark the excellent and profound teachings of the master regarding virtue, justice, and the state, and on the art of definition and classification of concepts, the knowledge of the eternal verities and the innate ideas of the mind. Instead, these men heed only what Plato said when he gave free rein to his genius and spoke rather as a poet than as a philosopher

about the world-soul, the subsistence of ideas independently of things, about the purifications of the soul, and so forth. All this was zealously snatched up by Plato's disciples and adulterated and decked out with many an added fancy. For all the neo-Pythagorean and Neoplatonic philosophers were given to superstition and were for ever in pursuit of miracles, whether this was because of a lack of mental talent, or in order to gain admiration, or to be able to compete with the Christians with whom they had to contend.¹

Such judgment and critical analysis were possible only to a thinker who, like Leibniz, had rediscovered for himself the fundamental problems of Plato's logic and dialectic. Like the Cambridge philosophers, Leibniz is a metaphysical spiritualist; but he is to be distinguished from them in that he does not base his spiritualism on purely religious assumptions, but on a logical and mathematical idealism. And to this end he appeals to Plato for support. Thus the historical influence of Plato since the Renaissance has tended in two directions. Platonic forces affect Ficino and Pico, and Cudworth and More; but their operation is not less strong, while clearer and purer, in Kepler, Galileo and Leibniz. The former are especially concerned with Plato's doctrines of love and beauty; the latter with Plato's theory of knowledge, which they emphasise as the crucial phase of this philosophy. The former read the *Symposium*, the *Phaedrus* and the *Timaeus*; the latter the *Meno*, the *Theaetetus* and the *Sophist*. To get an idea of Plato's significance in the history of European thought, one must see both these lines of development together. That the same thinker could determine not only the

¹ See Leibniz, *Philosophische Schriften*, VOL. VII, p. 147.

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direction of the philosophy of religion in modern times, but the direction of logic and epistemology, is perhaps the best evidence we have of the diversity of opposites which Plato's thought embraces and of the power by which he controlled this diversity.

CHAPTER SIX

THE END OF THE CAMBRIDGE SCHOOL AND ITS SUBSEQUENT INFLUENCE— SHAFTESBURY

THE achievements of the men who founded the Cambridge School were not confined within the narrow sphere of abstract speculation or erudition : rather, they won general recognition in the history of ideas. But this was not due to the merits of their writings, the very form of which precluded any truly universal influence. Even in seventeenth-century England, the Cambridge School seems quite unmodern in that it uses a literary form long since superseded and basically obsolete. Modern philosophic thinking gave birth to the essay, and it gained its first great successes with this form of writing. Montaigne's *Essais* not only found a new philosophic style, but through this style they give expression to a new philosophic attitude. The relation of the individual to the world, of the writer to his work, is here fundamentally different from that of the Middle Ages and scholasticism. The individual not only desires but dares to express himself as he really is ; for he is confident that in so doing he will also indirectly express the form of the universe, and represent it more faithfully and exactly than any mere system of abstract concepts can possibly do. Objective truth is attainable only through truth towards oneself, through truthfulness in the individual. Thus Montaigne says that the observation and faithful

portrayal of himself are both his physics and his metaphysics :

Out of the experience I have of my selfe, I finde sufficient ground to make my selfe wise. . . . *Everyman beareth the whole stampe of humane condition.* Authors communicate themselves unto the world by some speciall and strange marke ; I the first, by my generall disposition ; as *Michael de Montaigne* ; not as a Grammarian, or a Poet, or a Lawyer.¹

A greater contrast is scarcely conceivable than that between this sort of experience of the self and the strictly rational method according to which Descartes constructs his philosophy. But he, too, gives us the momentous discoveries which were to reshape logic, mathematics, and physics, not in the form of a textbook, but in the form of essays. His *Discours de la méthode* combines throughout the objective development and demonstration of his ideas with a biographical presentation. Not only does a new system speak in Descartes, but through this system a distinct individual, a personal attitude and general persuasion, make themselves felt. If one looks towards England, one finds that here, too, a new mode of thought and a new literary style were achieved in Bacon's *Novum Organum*. Bacon deliberately abandons the scholastic method of argument and presentation. He chooses the aphorism for the expression of his thoughts, and nothing delights him more than to give his aphorisms a pregnant brevity and an incisive poignancy. Hobbes is also a master of this new art. He cultivates extreme precision and trench-

¹ Montaigne, 'Of Experience' and 'Of Repenting' ; cp. *The Essayes of Michael, Lord of Montaigne*, tr. John Florio, three volumes, London, 1908, VOL. III, pp. 414 and 22.

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ancy, preferring short and paradoxical statements to the extensive spinning out of an argument. The contrast is at once obvious between this procedure and the style of the Cambridge men. Real pregnancy of thought, and brevity and clarity of expression were absent in all of their writings. They leave no middle term in their argument to be supplied by the reader. They spare no quotation ; on the contrary, they are ever intent on unfolding before us the entire wealth of their historical, philological and theological erudition. But especially in Cudworth's *True intellectual Systeme of the Universe*—whose 900 pages in folio comprise only the first part of the work as he planned it—this unfolding leads to the most tedious diffuseness and at times to the complete disintegration of his central idea. Repetitions and excursions and demonstrations and polemical digressions pile up higher and higher as the book goes on. By adopting this manner of writing the Cambridge School had, so to speak, sealed its literary fate ; it had shut itself up in the scholar's study. Its influence in the immediate future—disregarding its very limited and indirect, and for the most part purely negative effect on Locke¹—did not carry beyond the walls of the English universities. That it did not remain in this isolation, but, though rather late, rejoined and gave a certain direction to the intellectual life of the world at large—this the Cambridge School owes to the one great writer who took sides with it and defended its central convictions with all the splendour of his poetic and rhetorical diction. It is principally Shaftesbury who saves the Cambridge School from the fate of a learned

¹ Cp. Hertling, *John Locke und die Schule von Cambridge*. But Hertling greatly over-estimated this influence.

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curiosity and makes it a philosophic force in the centuries to come.

All available external evidence concerning Shaftesbury's philosophical development indicates unambiguously that from an early period in his life he was profoundly influenced by the Cambridge thinkers, and that throughout his life he felt greatly indebted to them. In 1698 Shaftesbury brought out the first edition of Whichcote's *Sermons*; and the introduction to this publication, which he wrote at the age of twenty-seven forms the beginning of his literary career. But even at the height of his powers in *The Moralists* he recalls with feelings of gratitude Cudworth's *Intellectual System*; and he complains of 'that Pious and Learned Man's Case' who has shared the fate of all those who venture in religious matters to defend a personal conviction, and has been misunderstood and declared a heretic.¹ More's *Enchiridion Ethicum*, the principal ethical writing of the Cambridge School, also received Shaftesbury's unreserved recognition.² This recognition bears the more weight, since in general Shaftesbury is not favourably inclined towards philosophical systems. It is a well-known saying of his that 'the most ingenious way of becoming foolish, is *by a system*'.³

As for *Metaphysicks* [he writes in the same work], and that which in the Schools is taught for *Logick* or for *Ethicks*; I

¹ Shaftesbury, 'The Moralists,' PART II, sect. 3; in *Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times, etc.*, second revised edition, three volumes, London, 1714, VOL. II, p. 262.

² Cp. Shaftesbury's letter to Michael Ainsworth, 30 December, 1709, in *Several Letters written by a Noble Lord to a young Man at the University*, London, 1716.

³ 'Soliloquy or Advice to an Author,' PART III, sect. 1, in *Characteristicks*, VOL. I, p. 290.

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shall willingly allow it to pass for *Philosophy*, when by any real effects it is prov'd capable to refine our Spirits, improve our Understandings, or mend our Manners. But if the defining *material* and *immaterial Substances*, and distinguishing their *Propertys* and *Modes*, is recommended to us, as the right manner of proceeding in the Discovery of our own Natures, I shall be apt to suspect such a Study as the more delusive and infatuating, on account of its magnificent Pretension.¹

If Shaftesbury excepts the Cambridge Platonists from this judgment, it is because he was able to penetrate their scholastic exterior and get at the moral and religious core of their doctrine in its pure form. In spite of their obvious passion for system-building and their ostentatious erudition, Cudworth and More are not mere philosophical scholars in Shaftesbury's eyes, or representatives of that sectarian spirit which he finds as repugnant in philosophy as in religion. 'Tis not *Wit* merely', thus Shaftesbury expresses his philosophical ideal,

but a *Temper* which must form the Well-Bred Man. In the same manner, 'tis not a *Head* merely, but a *Heart* and *Resolution* which must compleat the *real* Philosopher.²

It was the highest compliment that Shaftesbury could pay the Cambridge men to call them philosophers in this sense. He felt his indebtedness not only in particular ideas which he took over from them, but the real bond attaching him more firmly and lastingly to their cause was their fundamental disposition of mind, it was that

¹ Ibid., VOL. I, p. 289.

² Miscellany III, ch. I, of 'Miscellaneous Reflections,' in *Characteristics*, VOL. III, p. 161.

'moral taste' which Shaftesbury so often terms the basis and true criterion of all judgments concerning truth, beauty and morality. One misunderstands Shaftesbury if one takes this criterion simply as a recommendation of 'common sense' in philosophy. What he calls '*sensus communis*' is something different and more profound. It is a certainty which reveals itself only to the nobler and finer nature, which for this reason does not possess less, but rather the very highest evidence and true universality. With this conviction Shaftesbury resumed the struggle which the Cambridge philosophers had begun; and he felt himself as their successor, carrying their task to completion. Like them, he attacks fanaticism and the narrow-minded sectarian spirit of the puritans. Nothing is for him so sure a sign of depravity, indeed of the complete moral degeneracy of human nature, as blind religious zeal and malicious religious persecution. To this dogmatic narrow-mindedness he opposes a religion of freedom, to the religion of mistrust he opposes a religion of trust, to the religion of escape from, and contempt for, the things of this world, he opposes a religion of aesthetic enjoyment of the world.

This was in fact the same religion as that which the Cambridge men had already proclaimed. 'Religion is intelligible, rational and accountable; it is not our *Burthen*, but our *Privilege*'.—So Whichcote had already taught.¹ This doctrine forms henceforth the keynote of the Cambridge School. The clearest and finest expression of the religious ideal of this movement is to be found in John Smith's discourse on 'The Excellency and Nobleness of True Religion'.

¹ Aphorism 220. Cp. above, ch. ii.

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Religion is no such austere, sour, and rigid thing, as to affright men away from it: No, but those that are acquainted with the power of it, find it to be altogether sweet and amiable . . . it does not consist in a few Melancholy passions, in some dejected looks or depressions of Mind: but it consists in *Freedom, Love, Peace, Life, and Power*. . . .

Religion is no sullen Stoicism or oppressing Melancholy, it is no enthralling tyranny exercised over those noble and vivacious affections of Love and Delight . . . but it is full of a vigorous and masculine delight and joy, and such as advanceth and ennobles the Soul, and does not weaken or dissipate the life and power of it. . . .

Another Particular wherein men mistake Religion, is *A constrained and forced obedience to God's Commandments*. That which many men (amongst whom some would seem to be most abhorrent from Superstition) call their *Religion*, is indeed nothing else but a *δεισδαίμωνία* [fear of demons] . . . *such an apprehension of God as renders him grievous to men, and so destroys all free and chearfull converse with him, and begets instead thereof a forc'd and dry devotion, void of inward Life and Love*. Those *Servile* spirits which are not acquainted with God and his Goodness, may be so haunted by the frightfull thoughts of a Deity, as to scare and *terrify* them into some worship and observance of him. They are apt to look upon him as . . . *an hard master*; and therefore they think something must be done to *please* him, and to mitigate his severity towards them: and though they cannot truly *love* him . . . yet they cannot but *serve* him so far as these rigorous apprehensions lie upon them: though notwithstanding such as these are very apt to perswade themselves that they may pacify him and purchase his favour with some *cheap services*. . . .

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Because they are not acquainted with God . . . they are ready to paint him forth to themselves in their own shape : and because they themselves are full of *Peevishness* and *Self-will* . . . and are easily intic'd by Flatteries ; they are apt to represent the Divinity also to themselves in the same form . . . and yet because they bear the burden and heat of the day, they think, when the evening comes, they ought to be more liberally rewarded ; such *slavish spirits* being ever apt inwardly to confest that Heaven receives some emolument or other by their hard labours, and so becomes indebted to them. . . .

The spirit of true Religion is of a more *free, noble, ingenuous and generous nature*. . . . It [i.e. "Divine love"] *thaws* all those *frozen* affections which a *Slavish fear* had congealed and lock'd up, and makes the Soul most chearfull, free, and nobly resolved in all its motions after God. . . .

The more high and *Noble* any Being is, so much the *deeper radication* have all its *Innate virtues* and Properties within it, and are by so much the *more Universal* in their issues and actings upon other things : and such an inward living principle of virtue and activity further heightened and united and informed with *Light* and *Truth*, we may call *Liberty*. Of this truly-noble and divine Liberty Religion is the Mother and Nurse. . . . The most generous Freedom can never be took in its full and just dimensions and proportion, but then when all the Powers of the Soul exercise and spend themselves in the most large and ample manner upon the Infinite and Essential Goodness, as upon their own most proper Object. . . .

There are a sort of *Mechanical* Christians in the world, that not finding *Religion* acting like a *living form* within them, satisfie themselves only to make an *Art* of it. . . . But true Religion indeed is no *Art*, but an *inward Nature* that conteins all the laws and measures of its motion within it self.

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. . . If it could be supposed that God should plant a Religion in the Soul that had no affinity or alliance with it, it would grow there but as a strange slip. But God when he gives his Laws to men, does not by virtue of his *Absolute dominion* dictate any thing at randome, and in such an arbitrary way as some imagine. . . . Some are apt to look upon God as some *Peevish* and *Seif-will'd* thing, because themselves are such : and seeing that their own *Absolute* and naked *Wills* are for the most part the *Rules* of all their actions and the impositions which they lay upon others ; they think that Heaven's Monarchy is such an *arbitrary* thing too, as being govern'd by nothing else but an *Almighty Absolute Will*. . . .

Nor does he [God] charge any Duty upon man without consulting first of all with his *Goodness* : which being the Original and adequate Object of a Good man's Will and affections, it must needs be that all the issues and effluxes of it be entertain'd with an answerable complacency and chearfulness. This is the hinge upon which all true Religion turns, the proper Centre about which it moves ; which taking a fast and sure hold of an innate and correspondent Principle in the Soul of man, raiseth it up above the confines of Mortality, and in the day of the mighty power makes it become a free-will-Offering unto God.¹

Shaftesbury felt a profound spiritual kinship with the sentiments expressed in the above quotation. He not only shared Smith's view but from his first to his last writing he developed it in almost exactly the same words.² To be sure, he contributes an aspect all his own which could not fail to give his teachings an entirely new force and his utterance a different echo. For

¹ Smith, 'The Excellency and Nobleness of True Religion,' chs. iii and vi ; 'The Shortness and Vanity of a Pharisaick Righteousness,' ch. iv ; cp. *Select Discourses*, pp. 361ff. ; pp. 392ff. ; pp. 412ff.

² Compare, for instance, *Characteristicks*, VOL. I, pp. 97ff., p. 107 ; VOL. II, pp. 57ff. ; pp. 65ff. and *passim*.

Shaftesbury is the first great aesthete that England produced. English empirical philosophy created no systematic aesthetics. It was not without scattered observations on the sense of the beautiful and the sublime ; but these were confined entirely to the field of psychology and their explanation was sought according to the basic pattern of associationist psychology. Shaftesbury is the first for whom the problem of aesthetic form becomes an all-embracing and fundamental problem, as he is also the first in whose writings the concept of artistic genius attains universal significance. Artistic genius does not imitate created nature ; it imitates the creative genius of the universe itself : it is 'a second Maker ; a just Prometheus under Jove'.

Like that Sovereign Artist or universal Plastic Nature, he forms a *Whole*, coherent and proportion'd in it-self, with due Subjection and Subordinacy of constituent Parts. He notes the Boundaries of the Passions, and knows their exact *Tones* and *Measures* ; by which he justly represents them, marks *the Sublime* of Sentiments and Action, and distinguishes *the Beautiful* from *the Deform'd*, *the Amiable* from *the Odious*.¹

From such belief in the creative and shaping power of art Shaftesbury derived his belief in the original moral and religious power of man. This artistic spirit was foreign to the Cambridge Circle. Cudworth, while serious and profound, is a dry-as-dust scholar. His great work not only timidly avoids any free movement of the mind, but lacks all sense of proportion and symmetry, or of a proper architectonic arrangement of a comprehensive whole. As for Henry More, his versatile and active mind constantly oversteps the bounds of purely

¹ 'Soliloquy,' PART I, sect. 3, in *Characteristicks*, VOL. 1, p. 207.

logical reasoning ; and, in keeping with his love for the poetical exposition of his doctrine, he introduces allegories and metaphors, poetic images and parables, into his writings. But all this does not spring from the gift of a quick and active imagination, from a really artistic forming-power, and a refined artistic taste. Henry More's imagination is that of a visionary ; even when he believes he is speaking as a rigorous thinker, he is continually possessed by this imagination and lured into the realm of speculative adventure and of theosophic mysticism. Shaftesbury was the first to demand, and to master, aesthetic form, and his apostrophe to nature ¹ is a creation of genuine and lofty philosophic poetry. He not only holds that 'a! Beauty is TRUTH',² but for him the converse of this maxim is also true : truth must also possess beauty of form. Form is not merely something appended and external, but the reflection of the soul itself ; and all external form can be called beautiful only in so far as in this wise it reflects and evinces an 'inward form'. Ethics, metaphysics, and religion are now subjected to this law of form. Shaftesbury rejects the religion of all those who have never experienced the beauty of the universe and are incapable of artistic enthusiasm.³ And the capacity

¹ 'The Moralists,' PART III, sect. 1, 'Characteristicks, VOL. II.—Tr.]

² ['*Sensus Communis* ; an Essay on the Freedom of Wit and Humour in a Letter to a Friend,' PART IV, sect. iii, para. 1, in *Characteristicks*, VOL. I.—Tr.]

³ See 'A Letter concerning Enthusiasm,' sec. 7, in *Characteristicks*, VOL. I, pp. 52ff., and 'The Moralists,' PART III, sect. 2, in *Char.*, VOL. II, p. 400. Cp. especially Shaftesbury's *Philosophical Regimen* : 'Shall I be ashamed of this diviner love . . . ? Is this enthusiasm ? Be it : and so may I be ever an enthusiast. Happy me, if I can grow on this enthusiasm, so as to lose all those enthusiasms of every other kind and be whole towards this.' *The Life, Unpublished Letters, and Philosophical Regimen of Anthony, Earl of Shaftesbury*, ed. Benjamin Rand, London, 1900, p. 33.

for humour must accompany that for enthusiasm. Humour represents that fundamental attitude and disposition of the soul in which it is best equipped for the comprehension of the beautiful and the true. This is not only the attitude in which the world of art is first fully revealed to the soul, but also that in which the soul gains the proper standpoint for judgments concerning questions of faith and knowledge and concerning religion and philosophy.

The recognition of humour as a fundamental power of the soul and likewise as an objective criterion of truth and falsehood is indeed one of the most paradoxical features of Shaftesbury's world-picture. When this doctrine first appeared in Shaftesbury's *Letter concerning Enthusiasm* and in his *Essay on the Freedom of Wit and Humour*, it excited the liveliest surprise and the sharpest protest. Shaftesbury's son informs us in a brief life of his father that, immediately following the publication of the first of these writings (1708) there appeared no less than three refutations.¹ And this opposition was not raised by the narrow-minded alone, but reached considerably further. No less a figure than Berkeley violently assailed Shaftesbury and denied the existence in him of any trace of genuine religious feeling.² Was it not flagrant contempt of religion to advocate with Shaftesbury the thesis that religious error and fanaticism are not to be suppressed by force, but combated with the weapons of satire and subjected to the 'test of ridicule'? Did not the most deliberate urbane scepticism lurk behind this proposal, smilingly overleaping all bounds, disputing and destroying all seriousness in

¹ For the titles of these refutations, see Rand, op. cit., p. xxvn.

² Cp. Berkeley's *Alciphron, or the Minute Philosopher*.

religion? Even the young Herder, warm admirer of Shaftesbury as he was, could not follow him on this point; he saw in him a 'philosophical scoffer'.¹ But Shaftesbury is not a Voltaire. His inner feelings towards religion are utterly opposed to those of the French Encyclopaedists. In order not to miss his central purpose one must imagine as distinctly as possible the particular as well as the general historical conditions which gave rise to the *Letter concerning Enthusiasm* and the *Essay on the Freedom of Wit and Humour*. Like the Cambridge Platonists Shaftesbury finds himself confronted with the harsh seriousness no less than with the severe intolerance and the dogmatic narrowness of Calvinism and puritanism. Against both he has to carry on his struggle for a free form of religion, a form of religion which faces the world ingenuously and enjoys the world.² But if this circumstance explains his defence of the rights of humour against a gloomy and ascetic attitude towards the world, it is not less remarkable that he does not stop here, but turns from the defensive to the offensive. By a masterly swordsman's trick he knows how to exchange weapons in this conflict. Humour need not justify itself before

¹ Cp. Herder's letter to Kant, 1768, in *Immanuel Kants Werke*, eleven volumes, ed. Ernst Cassirer, Berlin, 1922-23, VOL. IX, p. 64.

² Nothing can be more misleading than the attempt to deduce Shaftesbury's religion from the basic spiritual forces of Calvinism, or the characterisation of Shaftesbury as 'an exponent of the Calvinist tradition.' See Christian Friedrich Weiser, *Shaftesbury und das deutsche Geistesleben*, Leipzig, 1916, p. 83. Wherever Shaftesbury discusses the problems of Calvinistic dogmatics, his views stand rather in the sharpest contradiction to Calvin and the Calvinist tradition. Cp., for example, 'An Inquiry concerning Virtue or Merit,' BOOK I, PART 3, in *Characteristicks*, VOL. II, pp. 55ff.; p. 71. Moreover, Shaftesbury's position with respect to the philosophy of religion of the Cambridge School would suffice to place him outside the boundaries of Calvinistic religious teaching. Cp. above pp. 65ff.

religion, but religion before humour. Thus all ostensible religious revelation and ecstasy are subject to the critique of humour. This is indeed a strange demand, and it is no wonder that it has almost always been misconstrued. In order to understand it in its origin, its tendency, and its significance, one must look far afield among philosophical systems and far back in the history of thought. One must ask oneself the general question as to what part the various types and species of the comic have had in the formation of the modern world and what latent energies seek expression in these types.

It is at once evident that, along with all the other fundamental powers of the intellect to which it gave new form, the Renaissance also endowed the comic with new force and new meaning. Our conception of the Renaissance would remain fragmentary and incomplete, if we were to forget this aspect of the comic. Ariosto and Boiardo in the Italian Renaissance, Rabelais in the French, and Cervantes in the Spanish—all have their necessary places. These names signify far more than mere details in the luminous and variegated picture of the literary Renaissance; they represent its substance and spirit in all its vigour and in its clearest expression. It was first in the realm of the comic that this spirit celebrated its highest triumphs and won its decisive victories. These types of the comic are most diverse; they are nationally coloured and conditioned in the extreme. But in all its variations the comic performs, nevertheless, a certain similar intellectual task. In Italy the comic takes the form of invective and satire in Aretino, and of burlesque in Boiardo and Pulci; in Spain it is associated with the

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pathetic ; in France it finds expression in witty play of the intellect or in coarse obscenity ; and in Germany, as for instance in Hans Sachs, its favourite form is farce and masquerade. But throughout all these modifications the comic remains, after all, the same force limited by, and characteristic of, the age as a whole. Everywhere it is striving towards one principal goal, the goal of liberation. Renaissance emancipation from all the forces that were binding it to the past, to tradition and to authority, is really achieved only when it succeeds in reflecting these forces in the comic mirror. In this mirror Boccaccio in the *Decameron* views monasticism, and Cervantes chivalry. The Renaissance power of comic representation thus belongs inseparably and essentially to its power of action, to its vital and creative energies. Yet, if the comic thus became the strongest aggressive weapon of modern times, its effect was, on the other hand, to take away the violence and bitterness of that struggle out of which the modern era arose. For the comic spirit contains also an element of balance and reconciliation. It does not entertain feelings of hatred towards the world which its free play is destroying, which it cannot but negate ; on the contrary, the comic spirit forms rather the last glorification of this decadent world. In Cervantes' Don Quixote the decline of the medieval chivalric world reaches its final stage, and yet from the ruins of this world emerges a heroic individual, an incomparably original character, seen with the eyes of a great poet and shaped by his noble capacity for sympathy and understanding. Thus in this power of the comic lives the power of love which will and can understand even that form of the world which the intellect must abandon and surmount. Love

cannot check the process of destruction, but it retains in the image that which must perish in reality.

But we cannot pursue here in further detail the general function of the comic spirit in the formation of European intellectual life. We must be content to consider its achievement and influence within the narrower circle of the English Renaissance. In the sixteenth century England became the cradle and the first home of what we today call 'humour' in the special and in the fullest sense of the word. As the English language gave the word its characteristic meaning, so the English mind furnished it with a definite, novel and original quality. From the different kinds and varieties of the comic, from sarcasm and jest, from satire and irony, emerges the new approach, the original form of humour, with increasing clarity and self-consciousness. This humour must first be stripped of its multifarious cloaks and disguises, but it stands before us finally as an original and independent entity. Even in the age of English humanism this tendency appears. Italian humanism is characterised by polemic and invective; English humanism by humour. Humour formed the point of contact between Erasmus and Thomas More and led to their collaboration. That writing of Erasmus's from which, more perhaps than from any other, one can gain an insight into his personality, his genius as a writer, his new humanistic ideal, and his attitude towards life and the world, was the product of their joint reading of Lucian. In *The Praise of Folly* Erasmus reveals himself just as he is, as that strange mixture of gentleness and energy, of cautious scepticism and of fiery reforming enthusiasm. In his English host, Thomas More, at whose house and in whose intellectual

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atmosphere the *Encomium Moriae* was conceived, one finds humour in a still more powerful and original form. More's humour is mentioned by all his biographers and witnessed by innumerable anecdotes. The 'laughing philosopher' was the favourite epithet given him by his friends. More's humour does not stop at coarseness and burlesque, but even here it never loses its distinctive dignity, freedom, and intellectual superiority. The purity and depth of this humour is proved in More's own life ; it stayed by him to his tragic end. Even while in prison, in the last days before going to the scaffold, he can still find a ready jest ; he still commands that liberating laugh so characteristic of him. In this respect he truly belongs to the English Renaissance, to that century which produced the poetry of Shakespeare.

In the genesis of modern humour Shakespeare's comedies present the first important documents. An inner transition in atmosphere and sentiment can be traced in the style and in the change of style of Shakespearean comedy. The early comedies are chiefly concerned with the witty jest, with the light and merry humour which sovereignly disposes of human fates and figures. They closely observe even in details the great models prescribed by the age for this form of wit. Lyly's *Euphues, or the Anatomy of Wit* exerted an important influence on the structure of Shakespearean wit. In his first comedies Shakespeare not only speaks the language of *Euphues* as a virtuoso, but he lives within the peculiar intellectual horizon of this work. One fails to recognise the extent of this horizon, if one sees in Euphuism nothing but a new literary variety. As always, the conception and treatment of speech is but

a symptom of a general and fundamental intellectual disposition. The neologism does not remain in the sphere of the word, but reflects a certain trend of thought. This trend is not limited to a single literary genre, nor to the borders of a particular national culture ; it is rather a distinctive sign of the general spirit of the Renaissance. The cultivation of Secentism or Marinism in seventeenth-century Italy, the development and culmination of Gongorism in Spain, the rise of the 'précieux' style in France—all of these are not simply external and accidental appearances paralleling Euphuism in England. They express rather a common stylistic motif whose explanation lies in the changed attitude towards the world of speech generally. The Renaissance does not look upon speech, through the medium of the great models of antiquity, only as crystallised form ; but the farther it penetrates into these models, the more clearly it perceives the forming energy, the plastic power, which is embodied in language as such. It becomes more and more convinced that intellectual renewal can be approached only from this point. The process of the cultivation of the intellect must begin with the cultivation of language, and the two must remain in the closest relationship. This demand for linguistic culture leads finally to an actual cult of linguistic forms. The expansion and refinement needed and desired by the mind can be attained only through an intensification and sublimation of these forms. The sense of truth and purity calls for the cult of speech as the only adequate means of expression. Thus in Spain the cult of the word and the cult of the concept become identical ; subtilty of thought is only to be achieved and

finally assured through subtilty of the word.¹ All those aspects of Euphuism, Gongorism and Marinism, which we ordinarily call eccentricities of language, derive their real strength from this source. They are due to the exaggeration of that original vitality of language which the Renaissance first felt again in modern times, and from which, as from a strong drink, it became intoxicated again and again. In the history of Greek thought such an intoxication had already occurred in the fifth century B.C. From it the whole movement of the Greek Enlightenment, the Sophist movement, receives its main impetus. The Sophists are in no sense the enemies; they are, on the contrary, the first masters, the true 'virtuosi', of the 'logos'. But they never separate the sense of 'logos' from its linguistic expression. Hence they seek in one intellectual act to establish logic on the one hand, and grammar and rhetoric on the other. Mastery of the word is supposed to carry with it 'sophia', as such, that is, complete mastery of all the objects of knowledge. For linguistic form alone is the key which can really unlock all intellectual content.²

This current of thought, springing from the funda-

¹ For the development of 'cultism' or 'Gongorism' in Spain, see L. P. Thomas, *Étude sur Gongora et le Gongorisme considérés dans leur rapports avec le Marinisme*, Paris, 1911; Elsha K. Kane, *Gongorism and the Golden Age*, Chapel Hill.

² It is interesting in this connection to observe how closely even such a specialised literary movement as for instance, 'Euphuism' in England is associated with the general intellectual movement which is derived from the Greek Sophists. It has in fact been shown that the real model and the immediate pattern of the Euphuistic style was classical Greek rhetoric. 'Euphuism,' writes Feuillerat in his book on John Lyly, 'like the greater part of the movements in European styles which developed at the time of the Renaissance, results from the imitation of ancient literatures; more particularly, it constitutes an English renunciation of the school of Gorgias.' Feuillerat, *John Lyly, Contribution à l'histoire de la Renaissance en Angleterre*, Cambridge, 1910, p. 469.

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mental tendency of the Renaissance itself, also pervades Shakespearean drama. The early comedies, beginning with *Love's Labour's Lost*, derive their stylistic and intellectual impulses from this source. The comedies thrive in this giddy whirl, whose giddiness they love to intensify. Again and again they try this game of the pure self-activity of the word. In so doing that inner, deeper dynamic of the spirit reveals itself, which can be felt only in such unceasing activity, in the competitive exercise of the intellectual faculties, and in the conflict of antitheses. Never, therefore, in Shakespeare's comedies do words serve in a merely descriptive function, and never do they simply serve the purpose of objective presentation. They seem rather to be charged with inner tensions, to be the common medium in which diverse individuals, characters, and types meet and carry on their endless disputes. Shakespeare's wit brings the disputatious dialogue to perfection, and thus moves most easily in the sphere of intellectual conflict. In *Love's Labour's Lost* Shakespeare himself speaks of 'this civil war of wits'.¹ This war comprehends the whole range of human sentiments, from the lowest to the highest, and to each Shakespeare gives its own peculiar face. Love between man and woman—between Berowne and Rosaline and between Benedick and Beatrice—is tuned precisely to this pitch; but also the ambition of the courtier and the man of the world seeks and finds ever new triumphs in this medium. For the word through its manifold meanings and its chameleonlike diversity, through its capacity to conceal itself beneath a thousand

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forms and to turn into these forms, spreads out before us the whole wealth of the intellectual world of man. It does not attempt to penetrate the depths of this world ; it confines itself rather to constant play about the surface of things. It is this reflecting, gleaming and glittering surface which Shakespeare's comedies reveal to us, and for a time they seem to feel quite at home and content with the surface of things. Yet even in the realm of mere wit, there are signs pointing in another direction. The free movement of wit seems sometimes, as it were, to meet with an inner resistance, and this negative moment signalises the advent of a new and deeper dimension of the comic ; it foretells the unique character of Shakespeare's humour. Rosaline demands of Berowne in the last scene of *Love's Labour's Lost* that, if he would win her, he must try the force of his wit elsewhere than heretofore. Instead of wasting his wit on trivialities, he is to aid the sick and suffering and win smiles from them by his humour. But here too the required transformation concerns humour rather in its applications than in its specific form and nature. There are, however, other passages in Shakespeare's comedies in which, quite by surprise, a change in kind, a real metamorphosis, becomes evident. In the scene from *Much Ado about Nothing* in which Beatrice rudely interrupts a light skirmish of wits with Benedick with the words : 'Kill Claudio !' ¹ we are on the threshold of a new, truly Shakespearean world, where henceforth there is to be no separation between comedy and tragedy. The form of humour now to prevail is not unsuitable to the immediate presence of suffering, or even death. It is no longer confined to mere play of the

¹ [ACT IV, SC. I, l. 293 ; op. cit., p. 214.—Tr.]

mind, to those 'paper bullets of the brain' ¹ which the contestants exchange. The typical melancholy figures of Shakespeare, like the Fool in *Lear*, like Jaques in *As You Like It*, or like Hamlet himself, now emerge, who live, as it were, completely enveloped in the atmosphere of the new humour. Humour henceforth takes its place in the heart of Shakespeare's world, forming everywhere the medium of reconciliation of all the opposites which this world comprehends. Great and small meet and counterbalance one another in this intellectual centre. For here the great, and even the sublime, must recognise its inconsequence, and the small is given a sense of its greatness. The trivial, the foolish, and the nonsensical are not merely made the subject of ridicule ; they are depicted along with their shortcomings, and loved because of these. When the nobility of *Love's Labour's Lost* assail the poor school-master Holofernes, who has to play the hero Pompeius, with shallow wit, and prevent him from finishing his part, Holofernes leaves the stage with the words : 'This is not generous, not gentle, not humble'.² The element of nobility, indeed of humility, characterises true humour, as distinguished from mere wit. For in the world of humour the apparent truth of things proves over and over again to be mere show. But humour can sense the real immanent truth behind show and acknowledge it as such.

The twofold feeling characteristic of Shakespearean humour is perhaps most easily observed where Shakespeare deals with his own intimate world, where through the medium of such feeling he reflects upon dramatic

¹ ACT II, SC. III, l. 243 ; op. cit., p. 392.

² ACT V, SC. II, l. 622 ; op. cit., p. 509.

writing. Here, too, in reality Shakespeare recognises neither high nor low. And it is humour of this sort which frees Shakespearean drama from all mere theatrical pomp and sham. For Shakespeare dares to forego sheer pomp. He puts rogues on the stage in the closest juxtaposition with scenes representing the highest creation of dramatic art. Poetic fancy sees itself for the first time in this mirror, and the recognition of its true self becomes its deepest self-renunciation. 'The best in this kind,' says Theseus to Hippolyta in *Midsummer Night's Dream* as she complains of the silliness of the play, *Pyramus and Thisbe*, 'are but shadows, and the worst are no worse, if imagination amend them'.¹ This melancholy reflection on the worth and insignificance of drama gives to the coarser scenes of *Midsummer Night's Dream* their real depth of humour. In the moral sphere, too, humour serves again and again as a basic element of self-evaluation. It fits things into their rightful places in the scale of being, robbing them of any usurped worth. Arrogant seriousness, when seen through the spectacles of Shakespearean humour, becomes mere pomposity ; and false grandeur becomes grandiosity. Yet humour in Shakespeare never evinces a moral motive or a deliberate intention to destroy. It is rather the things themselves, which, upon seeing their images as mirrored by this elemental power of the intellect, recognise so to speak their true inner proportion and return to it. In so doing they regain their appointed place in reality. In the realm of humour, too, epochs meet and intermingle in strange ways. For humour looks before and after ; it helps to usher in the vital shapes of the future without renouncing the past.

¹ [ACT V, SC. 1, LL. 211-12 ; op. cit., p. 578.—Tr.]

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In Henry V Shakespeare created a hero who still musters all the chivalric virtues and radiates the full glow of knighthood. Yet an unbridgeable chasm separates the young Prince Hal from Henry Percy, 'the Hotspur of the North'. Prince Hal admires—in fact he envies—Percy. But he knows he can never really be at home in Percy's world. The incomparable scene in which Hal plays the part of his favourite Percy gives direct expression to this attitude:

I am not yet of Percy's mind, the Hotspur of the North ; he that kills me some six or seven dozen of Scots at a breakfast, washes his hands, and says to his wife, "Fie upon this quiet life ! I want work." "O my sweet Harry," says she, "how many hast thou killed today?" "Give my roan horse a drench," says he, and answers, "Some fourteen," an hour after, "a trifle, a trifle." I prithee call in Falstaff : I'll play Percy, and that damned brawn shall play Dame Mortimer, his wife.¹

In this transformation of Percy into a comic actor, minds and epochs part. The heyday of chivalry must now decline as a new world emerges which is broader and freer, more elastic and uninhibited, than the heroic medieval world. Here there is room not only for the hero Percy, but also for his counterpart Falstaff. There is a genuinely symbolic and humorous truth in Falstaff's boast that it was he who slew Percy. For Falstaff's mock heroism is indeed in a certain sense the downfall of Percy. Henry V can never quite rejoin Percy's world, once he has met Falstaff and grown accustomed

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to the new outlook. And Falstaff himself in his oratorical masterpiece, in the great scene in which he plays King Henry IV, touches on a major malady of the age when he lays bare the false pomp and empty passion of its chivalric ideals. In this scene Shakespeare deliberately adopts the language of Euphuism. But he now sees the Euphuistic style in perspective and utilises it merely as a medium for rhetorical parody. So throughout Shakespeare humour becomes the touchstone of the true and the false, of the genuine and the counterfeit, of the essential and the merely conventional. A new mode of perception, a new science of men and things, thus emerges which finds in humour its own proper and adequate means of expression.

But we must not get lost in the mazes of this inexhaustible theme of Shakespearean humour. Let us take from it only one element which is intimately related to our central theme. This is the point where Shakespeare's humour encounters the historical phenomenon of puritanism and is forced to cope with it. It is well known that puritanism was one of the worst enemies that Shakespeare ever contended with. For it bore an irreconcilable grudge against the theatre and all dramatic art, which it looked upon as one of the most perilous temptations of the devil. Thus puritanism constitutes the most serious and immediate threat to Shakespeare's world. Yet the manner in which Shakespeare meets this threat once more illustrates the elemental power of his humour. His attitude towards this personally vital and critical struggle is neither tragic nor bitter. On the contrary, he is able to raise even this issue to the sphere of free play of the mental faculties. To his conflict with puritanism Shakespeare

owes one of his most perfect creations, the immortal figure of Malvolio. When Maria first divulges her conspiracy against Malvolio, she expressly calls him 'a kind of puritan'.¹ And as such he not only vehemently renounces the uninhibited enjoyment of life—'Dost thou think, because thou art virtuous, there shall be no more cakes and ale?' objects Sir Toby²—but he is also the sworn enemy of humour. In the scene between Olivia and the Fool, Malvolio interrupts the dialogue with the remark that he is surprised to see sensible people taking pleasure in such nonsense, for in doing so they are no better than the fools' zanies. But Olivia does not permit this objection to pass unchallenged. 'O ! you are sick of self-love, Malvolio,' she replies,

and taste with a distempered appetite. To be generous, guiltless, and of free disposition, is to take those things for bird-bolts that you deem cannon-bullets. There is no slander in an allowed fool, though he do nothing but rail ; nor no railing in a known discreet man, though he do nothing but reprove.³

With these words the comic aspect of the prank to be played on Malvolio first comes clearly to light. A sublime vengeance is indeed wreaked on Malvolio. For in his conceit and self-rightcousness he had placed himself above humour ; yet by this very fact he falls its victim. His virtue, apparently so undeviating, and his sober, healthy understanding, so highly esteemed by him, succumb to the same power which he had mis-

¹ *Twelfth-Night*, ACT II, SC. III, ll. 141-2 ; *Comedies*, p. 940. The Schlegel translation reads : 'eine Art von Pictist'—a sort of Pietist. This of course postpones cultural developments.

² [*Ibid.*, ACT II, SC. III, ll. 117-8 ; op. cit., p. 940.—Tr.]

³ [*Ibid.*, ACT I, SC. V, ll. 93-9 ; op. cit., p. 929.—Tr.]

judged and rejected. The fool does not fail to draw this conclusion in the final scene of the play. Here he links up the whole intrigue against Malvolio with those words about the baseness and perniciousness of fools, and characterises the prank as the just revenge which humour takes on its detractor.

Now, after this long digression, we are in a position to understand how Shaftesbury's apology for humour, his 'Essay on the Freedom of Wit and Humour', is related to the fundamental forces of the English Renaissance. By humour Shaftesbury does not mean purely intellectual sarcasm, as his adversaries have misconstrued him ; nor does he mean purely intellectual irony, however refined. He understands humour again in the basic sense which the Renaissance had given the term, that is, as a liberating, life-giving, and life-forming power of the soul. Establishing this power as his standard, he is certain that nothing really genuine and vital need fear its judgment.

Truth, 'tis supposed, may bear *all* Lights : and *one* of those principal Lights or natural Mediums, by which Things are to be view'd, in order to a thorow Recognition, is *Ridicule* it-self, or that Manner of Proof by which we discern whatever is liable to just Raillery in any Subject.¹

Thus humour is not directed against the seriousness of knowledge or against the dignity of religion ; but simply against a mistaken seriousness and an arrogated dignity, against pedantry and bigotry.² To the pedant, as to the zealot, freedom of thought is an abomination ;

¹ 'Essay on the Freedom of Wit and Humour,' PART I, sect. i, in *Characteristicks*, VOL. I, p. 61.

² *Ibid.*, PART I, sect. iii ; op. cit., VOL. I, pp. 66f.

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for the former takes shelter from it behind the dignity of knowledge, the latter behind the sanctified authority of religion. When both entrench themselves behind a false gravity, nothing remains but to subject them to the test of ridicule and so to expose them. Then only will knowledge and piety appear in their true character, which is not inconsistent with the enjoyment of life, which, on the contrary, is the finest expression of the enjoyment of life and of an affirmative attitude towards the world.

GOOD HUMOUR is not only the best security against *Enthusiasm*, but the best foundation of *Piety* and *true Religion* : For if right Thoughts and worthy Apprehensions of the Supreme Being, are fundamental to all true Worship and Adoration ; 'tis more than probable, that we shall never miscarry in this respect, except thro ill Humour only. . . . This however I am persuaded of, that nothing beside ill Humour can give us dreadful or ill Thoughts of a Supreme Manager. Nothing can persuade us of a Sullenness or Sourness in such a Being, beside the actual fore-feeling of somewhat of this kind within our-selves : and if we are afraid of bringing good Humour into Religion, or thinking with Freedom and Pleasantness on such a Subject as God ; 'tis because we conceive the Subject so like our-selves, and can hardly have a Notion of *Majesty* and *Greatness*, without *Statelyness* and *Moroseness* accompanying it.¹

Obviously, this is quite in the spirit of Olivia's defence of the freedom of humour in *Twelfth Night*. But we must be on our guard against finding in Shaftesbury's defence of humour nothing but that shallow form of optimism which would convince us that the sum of the

¹ 'Letter concerning Enthusiasm,' sect. iii, in op. cit., VOL. I, pp. 22ff.

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pleasures in the world outweighs the sum of the pains. Also, Shaftesbury does not see in humour the opposite of tragedy ; he does not take shelter behind the former in order to side-step the latter, or to escape it superficially. We read in his *Philosophical Regimen* :

This is life—recruiting, repairing, feeding, cleansing, purging ; aliments, rags, excrements, dregs. Which of all the sensations is it for which life is eligible ? Where is the day or hour in which we can say we live upon the present, and that our happiness is not still future and in promise ? Which part of our past life would we desire to live over again ? . . . what is it, then, that we call *sweet* in life ? . . . Where, therefore, lies the charm and temptation ? the past and present are nothing ; and the future is all. Now, what can this produce ? Everything wastes and is perishing ; everything hastens to its dissolution. . . . Mortalities must every day be expected—friends dropping off, accidents and calamities impending, diseases, lamenesses, deafness, loss of sight, of memory, of parts. . . . All is misery, disappointment, and regret. In vain we endeavour to drive away those thoughts ; in vain we strive by humour and diversion to raise ourselves ; which is but to fall the lower. He and he only is in any degree happy, who can confront these things ; who can steadily look on them without turning away his sight ; and who, knowing the sum and conclusion of all, waits for the finishing of his part, his only care in the meanwhile being to act that part as becomes him and to preserve his mind entire and sound, unshaken and uncorrupt ; in friendship with mankind, and in unity with that original mind with respect to which nothing either does or can happen but what is most agreeable and conducting, and what is of universal good.¹

¹ *Philosophical Regimen*, pp. 256f.

Here we are obviously far from that trivial optimism which denies suffering, or seeks in some way or other to beautify and conceal it. What is asked is that we face suffering consciously, and bear life's ill fortune without erring as to the meaning of life. The tragedy of existence does not prove its irrationality. Its value does not depend on the happiness it brings us ; for this value is not derived from without, but it is for us to determine what quality and value we would give to existence. Contemplation of the order governing things gives rise to that religious feeling which elevates us far above all mere desire for happiness. It teaches us to desire the whole rather than the part, and to affirm the whole for its own sake, not for ours.

This religious thought forms the starting-point of Shaftesbury's most important and fruitful achievement which is in the field of aesthetics. The concept of 'disinterested pleasure', which was taken up by eighteenth-century German aesthetics, further developed by Mendelssohn, and systematically propounded by Kant, derives from Shaftesbury. If one wished to trace this concept historically to its source, one would have to turn back to Plato again. The *Philebus* first distinguished clearly between the pleasureable and the beautiful, between sense-pleasure and pure pleasure—that of aesthetic contemplation. In Thomas More's *Utopia* we saw how the English Renaissance took up this idea of pure pleasure (καθαρὰ ἡδονή).¹ For More it is the token of genuine humanity, a boundary between human and animal being. 'The animal receives all impressions which affect its senses merely as stimuli to be applied to the immediate end of self-

¹ See above, pp. 109f.

preservation ; it turns these impressions at once into movements by which it seeks to grasp the necessary and useful and to flee from the disturbing and dangerous. Human existence is not, however, a matter of physical activity alone ; on the contrary, it can rise to freedom and to the heights of pure intuition. No other species of living creatures is capable of such exaltation. No other views with wonder the magnificent structure and the beauty of the world, and knows the delight of pleasing odours otherwise than in recognising nourishment. And no other living species distinguishes between harmonious and dissonant sounds.¹ In Shaftesbury we find the full and pure echo of this viewpoint ; but what in More had remained but a passing thought, becomes in Shaftesbury the foundation of an aesthetic system. The beauty of an object is really felt only when all thoughts of its possession, enjoyment, or control, are absent. 'The Bridegroom-Doge,' Shaftesbury tells us in 'The Moralists',

who in his stately *Bucentaur* floats on the Bosom of his THETIS, has less *Possession* than the poor *Shepherd*, who from a hanging Rock, or Point of some high Promontory, stretch'd at his ease, forgets his feeding Flocks, while he admires *her Beauty*.

Thus our delight in nature is of quite another sort than the enjoyment of those lower creatures which know nature only as the object of their appetites.

And yet, as lovely as are these Forms of Nature, the shining *Grass*, or silver'd *Moss*, the flowry *Thyme*, wild *Rose*, or *Honey-suckle* ; 'tis not their BEAUTY allures the neighbouring *Herds*, delights the brouzing *Fawn*, or *Kid*, and spreads the

¹ Thomas More, *Utopia*, BK. II (Everyman Library), pp. 72-80.

Joy we see amidst the feeding Flocks : 'Tis not the *Form* rejoices ; but that which is beneath the Form : 'tis *Savouriness* attracts, *Hunger* impels. . . . for never can the *Form* be of real force where it is un contemplated, unjudg'd of, un-examin'd and stands only as the accidental Note or Token of what appeases provok'd Sense, and satisfies the brutish Part.¹

In 'The Moralists' Shaftesbury anticipates a central conception of Kant's critique of aesthetic judgment ; and one also finds here a clear sketch for Kant's *Analytic of the Sublime*.²

But in his foundation of aesthetics Shaftesbury did not abandon the connection with his ethics and philosophy of religion. The concept of disinterested pleasure springs originally from this source ; it grows out of the unrelenting war which Shaftesbury wages against heteronomy in morals and religion. Whoever seeks to base morals and religion on hope and fear, robs both of their true meaning and highest value. It is a slavish morality and a servile religion that have need of such motivation. He who seeks the good, not for its own sake, but for the benefits to be derived from it, he who fears and avoids evil only because of punishment, proves by so doing that he has never known the real nature of morality and religion. If there is no ethical norm valid in itself and recognisable purely as such, then it is in vain to seek this norm in the will of an Almighty Being and through Him to force it on mankind. In this war upon ethical nominalism, upon the derivation of morals from sheer power, we see again the complete agreement between Shaftesbury and the

¹ 'The Moralists,' PART III, sect. ii, in *Characteristicks*, VOL. II, pp. 396, 424.
² Ibid., PART III, sect. i ; op. cit., VOL. II, pp. 388ff.

thinkers of the Cambridge School.¹ Like them, Shaftesbury never tires of protesting against a morality and religion that make man servile and mercenary, and would frighten him with the whip or lure him on with sweetmeats.² It is of special significance that on this point Shaftesbury turns against his own tutor and preceptor, that he unreservedly favours the ethics of the Cambridge School to that of Locke. Shortly after Locke's death a letter of his to Anthony Collins got abroad in which he had restated his moral and religious convictions and said that life in this world is but 'a scene of vanity', and man can find real satisfaction only in the consciousness of doing right and in the hope of a future life. Shaftesbury's criticism of this letter is highly revealing. He calls it the letter of a Christian, but refuses to see in it the letter of a dying philosopher. 'Consciousness,' he writes to a friend,

is, indeed, a high term, but those who can be conscious of doing no good, but what they are frightened or bribed into, can make but a sorry *account* of it, as I imagine. . . . The use I would have you make of it [memory] is, that our life, thank heaven, has been a scene of friendship of long duration, with much and solid satisfaction, founded on the consciousness of doing good for good's sake, without any farther regards, nothing being truly pleasing or satisfactory but what is thus acted disinterestedly, generously, and freely. This is what I can say upon experience, and this you will find sufficient at the last to make all reckonings clear, leaving no terrible account to be made up, nor terrible idea of those who are to account with. . . . Life is *vain* ('tis true)

¹ Cp. especially pp. 78ff. above.

² Cp. 'The Moralists,' PART II, sect. ii and iii; op. cit., VOL. II, pp. 247ff. and 256ff. See also 'An Inquiry concerning Virtue or Merit,' BK. I, PART III, and *passim*; op. cit., VOL. II, pp. 57ff.
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to those that make it so. And let those cry *vanity*, for they have reason. For my own part, who never could be in love with riches or the world, nor ever made any great matter of life, so as to love it for its own sake, I have therefore no falling out with it, now at last when I can no longer keep it ; so without calling names or giving hard words, I can part freely with and give it a good testimony : No harm in it all that I know ; *no vanity* : But (if one wills oneself) a fair, honest, sensible thing it is, and not so uncomfortable as it is made. No, nor so over-comfortable as to make one melancholy at the thoughts of parting with it, or as to make one think the time exceeding *short* and *passing*. For why so short if not sound and sweet ? Why complain both ways ? Is vanity, mere vanity, a happiness ? or can misery pass away too soon ? But the sweet is living (it seems), mere *living* and doing just the ordinary animal offices of life. . . . As for other offices more immediately human, and of the rational kind, such as friendship, justice, generosity, acts of love, and such like, the exposing of life, health, or fortune . . . these are no happiness ('tis supposed) ; no solid satisfaction without a reward. Hard, hard duties, if nothing be to follow ! Sad conditions at the best, but such as must be complied with for fear of what is worse. O Philosophy ! Philosophy !—I have heard, indeed, of other philosophy heretofore, but philosophy seems at present to be the study of making virtue burdensome and death uneasy. Much good may do those improvers of misery and diminishers of all that is good in life. I am contented that they should cry, *Vanity* ! For our part, let us, on the contrary, make the most of life and least of death. The certain way for this being (as I conceive) to do the most good, and that the most freely and generously, throwing aside selfishness, mercenariness, and such servile thoughts as unfit us even for this world, and much more for a better.¹

¹ Letter to a Friend, 2 December 1704-5 ; cp. Rand, op. cit., pp. 344ff.

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It was necessary to quote here in full, for these sentences summarise Shaftesbury's philosophy, and they epitomise his ethical and religious creed. One understands now why, holding this belief, he could not follow the theory of empiricism as Locke had stated it. There is a peculiar tragic irony in the circumstance that Locke was unable to convert to his theory just that thinker, his most intimate pupil, whom he had known from early childhood, and whose entire education had been entrusted to him; and that, on the crucial question of the apriority of the basic theoretical and moral concepts, Shaftesbury turns back to the opponents of empiricism, openly taking sides with the Cambridge philosophers. There was in fact an insurmountable opposition here, an opposition affecting not merely the results of thinking, but founded upon the original intellectual dispositions of the men themselves. The English Platonists had to follow another path than that upon which the English empiricists had set out. It is highly characteristic, and, historically speaking, extremely interesting, that Berkeley, who in his ecstatic idealism would seem at first glance more closely related to the Platonists than to the empiricists, opposed Shaftesbury most bitterly on just this point. To proclaim a morality not depending on rewards and punishments was to him the subversion of the foundations of Christianity. For such a doctrine Berkeley would not hesitate to summon the authority of the state against Shaftesbury.¹ Empiricism looks upon nature, as upon the human soul, as a sequence of causes and

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effects, and upon society and the state as a sequence of means and ends. It would investigate both sequences in order to control them, to be able to intervene and direct them towards given ends. The Platonists, on the other hand, pursue from the first a different course. They do not seek dominion ; they seek a knowledge of that which holds the world together at its core.¹ And they find this substantial bond, not in power, but in love, in the Platonic Eros. Out of this attitude develops that enthusiasm which Shaftesbury calls the source of all genuine philosophy. To the so-called practical ideals of empiricism, to the norm of mere utility, he opposes enthusiasm. The chain of causes and effects, and the chain of means and ends, must be broken, if we would rise to the free intuition of the universe. In knowledge, morality, and art, this demand must be satisfied. Science must be purified of the Baconian motto : '*scientia propter potentiam*' (knowledge for the sake of power). The aim of science should not be to dissect nature in order the better to reduce it to human control² ; it should be to see and understand nature as a whole through active devotion. It is the power of this devotion, not that of a forced conquest, which holds the key to nature. Nature reveals herself only to the magic of love ; what she does not willingly yield up, we try in vain to wrest from her with levers

¹ [Here and elsewhere Prof. Cassirer interprets Platonism by paraphrasing part of Goethe's *Faust*, PART I. Cf. II. 382-5 :

Dass ich erkenne was die Welt
Im innersten zusammenhält,
Schau' alle Wirkenskraft und Samen,
Und thu' nicht mehr in Worten kramen.—Tr.]

² Cp. above p. 45.

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and screws.¹ There is but one way to approach nature : we must observe her in the profusion of her forms, and seek to place ourselves at the centre of this great forming-process in order as far as is granted us to participate in it. Only he who knows his kinship with the genius of nature and has learned to converse with that genius, can understand nature's several creations. Thus Shaftesbury, like the Cambridge thinkers, looks upon nature as essentially a plastic unity and a plastic power.²

. . . O Mighty GENIUS ! Sole Animating and Inspiring Power ! . . . Thy Influence is universal : and in all Things thou art inmost. The vital Principle is widely shar'd, and infinitely vary'd : Dispers'd through'out ; no where extinct. All lives : and by Succession still revives. The Temporary Beings quit their borrow'd Forms, and yield their Elementary Substance to New-Comers. Call'd, in their several turns, to Life, they view the Light, and viewing pass ; that others too may be Spectators of the goodly Scene, and greater numbers still enjoy the Privilege of NATURE.³

Corresponding to the change in the view of nature is a change in the view of the moral world. Here, too, Shaftesbury, like the Cambridge men, stands sharply opposed to Hobbes. Polemic against Hobbes runs through all his writings, and it always harps on the same central theme. Bacon's inductive method seeks to establish a technique for the subjugation of nature ;

¹ [Cp. *Faust*, PART I, ll. 672-5 :

Geheimnissvoll am lichten Tag
Lässt sich Natur des Schleiers nicht berauben,
Und was sie deinem Geist nicht offenbaren mag,
Das zwingst du ihr nicht ab mit Hebeln und mit Schrauben.—Tr.]

² Cp. pp. 139-40 above.

³ 'The Moralists,' PART III, sect. i ; op. cit., VOL. II, pp. 366f.

Hobbes's philosophy of the state would teach a method for the subjugation of men. According to Hobbes dominion over man can be considered as assured only when all his conflicting impulses and inclinations have been brought under one will, as the scientist aims ultimately to comprehend all the phenomena of nature under one supreme law. The goal of ethics and that of the doctrine of the state are attainable only when the individual will has been broken and completely subordinated to the will of the state. For Shaftesbury, here also, it is not a question of the conquest of the human world, but of the contemplation of this world, of the intuitive knowledge of that bond which holds it together. This bond cannot be founded on contracts alone ; for what would give them their sanction, unless, prior to the conclusion of any contract whatever, some original standards were in force regarding the permissible and the reprehensible, regarding right and wrong ? In a most effective manner Shaftesbury unmasks the vicious circle in which Hobbes's theory of the state gets caught when it bases all obligation on consent alone, and yet has to make consent itself absolutely obligatory.

'Tis ridiculous to say, there is any Obligation on Man to act sociably, or honestly, in a form'd Government ; and not in that which is commonly call'd *the State of Nature*. . . . Now *the Promise* it-self was made in the *State of Nature* : And that which cou'd make a *Promise* obligatory in the State of Nature, must make *all* other Acts of Humanity as much our real Duty, and natural Part. Thus *Faith*, *Justice*, *Honesty*, and *Virtue*, must have been as early as the State of Nature, or they could never have been *at all*. The Civil Union, or Confederacy, cou'd never make *Right* or *Wrong* ; if they

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subsisted not before. He who was free to any Villany before his Contract, will, and ought to make as free with his Contract, when he thinks fit. . . . A man is oblig'd to *keep his Word*. Why? Because *he has given his Word to keep it*.—Is not this a notable Account of the Original of moral Justice, and the Rise of Civil Government and Allegiance ! ¹

If one would escape this *petitio principii*, there is nothing left but to go back to some form of natural sympathy, and upon that as a basis and first datum, to found all conventional, social, and juridical order. Without such a natural, primal sympathy of the individual for the whole, neither the natural nor the moral world is comprehensible. As the condition of knowledge of nature lies in our being and remaining one with nature, so the same thing can be still more correctly said of the social world. We should never be able to enter this world from without, whether by our own decision or coerced by the will of another being, if we did not from the first stand in its midst, if the individual were not the whole, and if he were not able to grasp and embrace this whole in pure devotion.

Shaftesbury's aesthetics, then, developed from this central theme of his doctrine of nature and his ethics. Aesthetics falls like ripe fruit into Shaftesbury's hands, for it is but another expression in explicit form of the general presupposition upon which his theory of nature and morality already depended. Shaftesbury had advocated the pure contemplation of nature, rather than its conquest ; and a selfless devotion, rather than the subjugation of the will. But it is precisely this act of contemplation and devotion which forms the basis

¹ '*Sensus Communis* ; an Essay on the Freedom of Wit and Humour,' PART III, sect. i ; op. cit., VOL. I, pp. 109ff.

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for all artistic creation and enjoyment. Where there is no intellectual freedom, there is no place for beauty ; the phenomenon of the beautiful can arise only out of and in the presence of freedom. The concept of disinterested pleasure now evolves, organically and by an inner necessity, from the idea of pure knowledge and the requirement of an '*amor non mercenarius*' (non-mercenary love). And it was this concept, together with Shaftesbury's other concept of 'inward form', which laid the foundations of eighteenth-century aesthetics. It is almost universally assumed that the intensification of the aesthetic interest in the eighteenth century is explicable in terms of the extension and refinement of psychological inquiry ; and that the aesthetic problem is simply a further development and natural outcome of basic psychological tendencies. But contrary to this supposition is the fact that precisely the great classical systems of English psychology contributed practically nothing towards the real foundation of aesthetics. There were of course investigations of the origin and structure of feeling which first marked out the paths along which aesthetics was to develop. But all of these investigations—as we have them in Hutcheson and Lord Kames, in Burke and Ferguson—go back to the pupils and disciples of Shaftesbury, not to those of Locke, Berkeley and Hume. In the structure of the empirical systems we never meet with aesthetics as an independent province on an equal footing with other branches of thought. In his encyclopaedia of knowledge, *The Advancement of Learning*, Bacon at least finds a place for poetry ; but poetry too is for him nothing but a certain form of knowledge. He thinks of poetry principally as allegory, as the metaphorical expression of some

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physical, historical or moral truth. In this sense poetry becomes for him the first stage of, and introduction to, knowledge. Lyric poetry is excluded from the poetic category, and assigned to philosophy and rhetoric, while epic and dramatic poetry are placed on a par with history. But poetry achieves its real perfection only in its symbolical or allegorical forms, because it is then most akin to knowledge itself.¹ No aesthetics could develop from such seeds and beginnings as these. Aesthetics is not a product of the general trend of English empiricism, but of English Platonism. The underlying reason for this is that the psychology of empiricism, with all its exactness of observation and subtilty of analysis, does not go beyond the sphere of receptivity, and that it possesses the tendency throughout to transform all psychic spontaneity into receptivity. Such an approach has no instrument to cope with the creative process. Aesthetics could develop only where a stern opponent of psychological sensualism arose, where not merely a philosophy of impression, but a philosophy of expression, was in request ; and where the idea was no longer looked upon, as in Hume, as the mere effect and copy of the sense impression, but as itself something original and independent. This transition is represented by Shaftesbury. For he seeks the beautiful not in the realm of the finished product, but in the activity, in the creative principle of the forming process : 'the Beautifying not the Beautify'd is the really Beautiful'. With this insight the real advance of aesthetics begins, and the doctrine of genius was founded which gave the crucial impetus to all

¹ For further discussion of Bacon's theory of poetry, see Kuno Fischer, *Francis Bacon und seine Schule*, BK. II, ch. vii.

further aesthetic inquiry. This doctrine does not derive from empiricism or sensualism ; it is born rather of Platonic enthusiasm. Beauty cannot be limited to the corporeal world, nor can it be confined to sense impression ; its source is rather to be sought where we ourselves stand in the sphere of life, activity and creation¹ : ‘ . . . the Beautiful, the Fair, the Comely, were never in the *Matter*, but in the *Art* and *Design* ; never in the *Body*, it-self, but in the *Form* or *Forming Power*’² This too is but a repetition of well-known statements of Plotinus which even the Cambridge Platonists liked to quote. Yet it was only in Shaftesbury that the doctrine they contain underwent its real resurrection. For this doctrine was now taken up by a thinker who was not concerned with speculation alone, but who from his earliest youth had been conversant with the writings of the ancients and accustomed to the contemplation of classical art. Only such a thinker could bring to full maturity the seeds of a philosophical aesthetics which were contained in the central teachings of the Cambridge men, and only he could create the form suitable for this content. The style of Shaftesbury’s ‘*Moralists*’ is not abstract and dialectical, but rhapsodic and hymnic ; and in this hymnic style the original force of the Platonic doctrine of Eros was revived for modern times.

In the middle of the eighteenth century this force enters the history of German thought, giving it a fresh impetus which none of the truly creative minds escaped. Winckelmann and Herder, and Schiller and Goethe, were most powerfully influenced. Winckelmann studied

¹ ‘The Moralists,’ PART III, sect. ii ; op cit., VOL. II, pp. 403ff.

² Ibid. p. 405.

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Shaftesbury's writings from his youth, and they became his guides on the way which led to his view of the art of antiquity and to his basic conception of the Platonic doctrine of ideas. Montaigne and Shaftesbury are the only modern philosophical writers who exercised an immediate influence on Winckelmann's education. According to Justi they are

the only modern philosophers for whom Winckelmann seems to have evinced a taste. Whereas ordinarily in his collectanea and notes he cites only single sentences, the extracts from these men swell to small volumes.¹

The writings of Shaftesbury were Herder's constant companions from an early age ; and that work in which he attempts to summarise his philosophical and speculative convictions, the *Conversations on God*, exhibits throughout the direct influence of Shaftesbury. But also the later works of Herder, the *Adrastea* and the *Briefe zur Beförderung der Humanität* (Letters for the Advancement of Humanity) return to the English philosopher again and again. They are meant as a sort of vindication of Shaftesbury's idea of religion against the theological attacks that had been launched against his so-called deism. Herder also admires Shaftesbury as a master of philosophical style ; he calls him 'Europe's amiable Plato', and considers him as almost the only modern writer who has 'tolerably learned' the art of the dialogue and knows how to employ it in a manner worthy of the Platonic model.² Goethe is indebted to

¹ Carl Justi, *Winckelmann und seine Zeitgenossen*, second edition, Leipzig, 1898, vol. I, p. 211.

² See Herder's *Fragmente über die neuere deutsche Literatur*, I. 92 (Suphan I, 182). Also *Eine Philosophie der Geschichte zur Bildung der Menschheit*, Erster Abschnitt (Suphan V, 490).

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Shaftesbury for the concept of 'inward form' which permeates his reflections on nature as well as on art, and his early fragment, 'Die Natur', expresses the same feeling that inspires Shaftesbury's apostrophe to nature in 'The Moralists'.¹ Finally, as regards Schiller, his whole aesthetics became a sort of synthesis of Kant and Shaftesbury, an attempt to reconcile Kant's concept of duty with Shaftesbury's philosophical position which seeks to deduce morality from the aesthetic concept of harmony and establish it on this basis. The requirement which Shaftesbury had set up in his concept of 'moral grace' becomes one of the fundamental norms to which Schiller's philosophical aesthetics is orientated.² Thus the Platonism of Shaftesbury is reborn in a new intellectual medium, and becomes one of the central forces out of which the philosophy and aesthetics of German idealism develop.

It would seem as if we had digressed far from our real point of departure in the consideration of this intellectual relationship. For in the eighteenth century, especially in Germany, the philosophy of the Cambridge School was no longer a living reality. It belonged to the past and could claim at most but a scholarly interest. For the present day the Cambridge School represents all the more a forgotten world. And yet it was not merely for the sake of scholarly curiosity that we

¹ Dilthey has shown the direct relationship between Goethe's fragment 'Die Natur,' 1782, and Shaftesbury's 'Moralists.' Cp. 'Aus der Zeit der Spinozastudien Goethes' (*Archiv für die Geschichte der Philosophie*, vol. vii, 1894); in *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. ii, pp. 391ff.

² Concerning Schiller's relationship to Shaftesbury, see the Introduction by Oskar Walzel to Schiller's *Philosophische Schriften*, in *Cotta'sche Säkular-Ausgabe*, vol. xi, pp. ixff. [See also Prof. Cassirer's essay entitled 'Schiller und Shaftesbury,' Publications of the English Goethe Society, new series, vol. xi, Cambridge, pp. 37-59.—Tr.]

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attempted to look back to that world again. What this study was intended to show is this : that the problems with which the Cambridge men wrestled are not antiquated, but have entered directly into the formation of the modern philosophical world ; and that their influence in an altered form persists to this day. The Cambridge School forms a sort of connecting-link between minds and epochs ; it is one of the piers of that bridge linking the Italian Renaissance with German humanism in the eighteenth century. The course of the history of thought does not advance from peak to peak ; and the history of ideas cannot be adequately treated, if, as is still the practice of the historian of philosophy, consideration is given only to the great philosophical systems. If one would understand the significance of ideas, one cannot overlook their immanent structure. But an insight into this structure is possible only when, instead of concentrating our attention exclusively on the high points of the great systems, we take our way through the valleys and from there by a gradual and patient ascent work our way up to the peak. Such a course has been the object of this study. It has endeavoured to show how a certain group of ideas, which had taken root in Italy through Nicolas of Cusa and acquired a stable form at the Florentine Academy, retains its force in English humanism and in English philosophy of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, in order finally to undergo a rebirth, a sort of metamorphosis and metempsychosis, in the history of German thought. The Cambridge School is merely one stage of this journey, and the thinkers of this school play only a modest role in this great intellectual process of development. But it is

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their undisputed achievement that they did not let the torch they bore go out ; and that, in spite of all opposition of contemporary philosophy and all attacks of theological dogmatism, they preserved a nucleus of genuine ancient philosophical tradition, and passed it on uncontaminated to the centuries to come.

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